

Clinton to visit Mideast Dec. 12-15

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton will travel Dec. 12-15 to Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank to meet key figures in the Middle East peace process, the White House said Friday. Clinton will meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and "speak to the Israeli and Palestinian people about the importance of the peace agreement and the need to continue to support the Middle East peace process," the White House said. The U.S. president, fighting an impeachment probe at home, is scheduled to leave Washington early Dec. 12 and return late on Dec. 15.

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Netanyahu cuts short European tour as Israeli deaths in Lebanon mount

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cut short a visit to Europe Friday to return home for an urgent review of Israel's occupation of south Lebanon following mounting troop losses in the area. Netanyahu decided to fly home from London and cancel a planned weekend visit to Spain after two Israeli soldiers were killed and two wounded overnight in the buffer zone Israel occupies in south Lebanon. The casualties brought the toll of Israel in the buffer zone over the past 12 days to seven killed and nine wounded in attacks by the Hizbollah resistance movement. "The security cabinet will meet on Sunday to study ways to protect the lives of our soldiers in southern Lebanon and the security of our towns and villages in northern Israel," Netanyahu said, adding that he would return to Israel on Sunday.

He said army commanders would present proposals for dealing with the "methods used by Hizbollah" on the ground. Netanyahu repeated his government's conditions for ending Israel's 20-year occupation of southern Lebanon, demanding guarantees for the security of both Israel and its militia allies in the South Lebanon Army. "Only if these two conditions are fulfilled we will withdraw from Lebanon, and as long as they are not fulfilled, we will remain there," Netanyahu said. But even before the latest losses, Netanyahu told reporters in London Thursday that his government would make a "reassessment" of its "methods and tactics" in Lebanon. He said the goal would be to improve the security of Israeli forces while seeking a negotiated withdrawal from south Lebanon. And Israeli newspapers



Israeli soldiers carry the coffin of Lieutenant Uriel Peretz, 22, during his funeral on Thursday. Peretz and another soldier were killed the previous day when a powerful bomb was detonated near their patrol in occupied south Lebanon by the Hizbollah (AFP photo)

reported Netanyahu saying privately that he was now willing to consider a proposal from his powerful foreign

minister, Ariel Sharon, for a gradual unilateral pullout from Lebanon coupled with a warning that Israel will retaliate

harshly for any subsequent cross-border attacks.

(Continued on page 12)

King Hussein may return home in early January

ROCHESTER (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein said Friday he may return home in early January after a sixth and final round of chemotherapy treatment. In a message the King sent to Senate Speaker Zeid Rifai, King Hussein said the final chemotherapy session will be followed by a three-day rest before undergoing a bone marrow transplant. Since July King Hussein has been receiving treatment for non-Hodgkins lymphoma at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota in the U.S. Following are major excerpts of the King's letter that was in reply to Rifai's message which contained Parliament's statement issued after its extraordinary meeting on Nov. 22 during which both Houses of Parliament expressed allegiance to King Hussein. With deep appreciation and gratitude I received your message containing the Parliament's statement after the extraordinary session.

I took an oath to safeguard the Constitution and serve the nation before Parliament in May of 1953 and I hope that I have been successful in achieving that goal. I received your message shortly before I left Washington for the Mayo Clinic, and I decided to delay my reply to it so that I can inform you that I have started the final chemotherapy session. The session will last five days to ensure that any lingering traces of the lymphoma have been removed. This will be followed by a three-day rest to be followed by the process of reintroducing the bone marrow that has been taken from my body recently in a procedure like a blood transfusion. This procedure will be followed by a recuperation period so that I can regain the minimum level of immunity. The procedure known as autologous transplant will revive immunity in my body with the new cells. For this reason it is of extreme importance that during this period I must not move outside the spot where the therapy is being carried out nor can I receive any visitors in view of the fact that I will be without immunity during the procedure. After having gone through all these procedures successfully, I will embark on the trip back home which I hope will be towards the end of the

month of December or around the beginning of the New Year. I have delayed my reply to you until I have become certain of the situation to convey to you the information and for the sake of reassuring my people and their representatives, the members of Parliament, that I have commenced the final phase of the treatment placing my trust in God and my nation which has experienced democracy and responsible freedom and has proved to be a united family embodying all citizens of various origins. I have one wish and that is to contribute towards removing any lingering anxiety in the minds of every Jordanian towards the future and to call on them to pursue their work to consolidate the process of construction on solid ground. I send you my love, appreciation and best wishes and gratitude for your noble feelings. I send this to my people and my clan who bow their heads only to God Almighty. I thank you for your overwhelming affection and I hope to see you soon. Please accept my greetings and those of Her Majesty Queen Noor and the rest of the Royal family.

Palestinians and Israeli troops clash in Hebron

Agencies
PALESTINIANS STONED Jewish settlers and Israeli soldiers Friday after settlers blocked Palestinian motorists using a road near their residence and then marched into the Palestinian-run sector of the West Bank city of Hebron. Israeli soldiers fired rubber bullets to disperse the stone-throwers and eventually cleared the group of about 20 settlers, most of them women, back into the Israeli-controlled downtown area. The clashes were triggered by the Israeli army's decision to open a road near the Jewish enclave of Avraham Avinu. The road had been closed to Palestinian motorists after hand grenades were thrown from there at a group of Israeli soldiers in September. On Friday, a bulldozer

cleared cement blocks from the road. Jewish settlers responded angrily, saying they were being endangered by Palestinian traffic passing close by their homes. "Many people have been wounded in this street," said settler leader Noam Armon. "I am afraid the reopening of the street will not bring peace and security." In response, settlers briefly blocked the street to Palestinian motorists. Several settlers then walked toward the Palestinian sector. Israeli troops tried to stop them, but the settlers kept on walking. As the settlers reached the Palestinian side, Palestinians threw stones at them from nearby rooftops. Soldiers responded with rubber bullets, and the settlers were eventually escorted back.

(Continued on page 12)

Baghdad: U.S. seeking any excuse to strike

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq accused the United States on Friday of looking for any excuse to launch military action, as U.N. arms inspectors in Baghdad said their numbers have been strengthened. The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling Iraq's weapons, meanwhile, went out "as usual" on its daily inspections of military and industrial sites. Ten days after UNSCOM resumed its work on the ground, "the American threats of aggression against Iraq have not stopped," said Al Thawra newspaper of Iraq's ruling Baath Party. "The U.S. administration and the Special Commission which is its henchman are still looking to provoke crises for the United States to use as a pretext to launch a new aggression." The paper said Iraq would not be swayed by threats of military action. "I will never give up on my fight to secure a lifting of the embargo which is [Washington]

is working by all means to keep in place," it said. The United States and Britain have maintained the threat of military action against Iraq if it fails to keep to its word and cooperate fully with UNSCOM. Meanwhile, a row over weapons documents which Iraq has refused to hand over to UNSCOM remains deadlocked. Baghdad has been under U.N. sanctions since it invaded Kuwait in 1990. An oil embargo can not be lifted until UNSCOM certifies the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and the means to produce them. On the ground, UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency are building up to their normal combined strength in Baghdad of around 130 members. A total of 92 British air strikes eased following Iraq's pledge on Nov. 14 to restore full cooperation with arms inspectors.

(Continued on page 12)

Prince Edward arrives in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Prince Edward of Britain arrived in Amman late Friday on a three-day visit during which he is scheduled to inaugurate and attend a series of cultural initiatives and events with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent. Together with Their Royal Highness Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath, Prince Edward will open Sunday an exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of the British Council in Jordan and inaugurate the extension to the Council's new Language Institute, according to a British Embassy statement. The exhibition includes original works by 17 of the most famous British painters

who visited the Holy Land during the 19th century, as well as a small collection of original photographs of the Holy Land dating back to the mid-19th century, said the statement, which was issued on Thursday. Today Prince Edward is scheduled to inaugurate the British Design and Packaging Exhibition, and attend a lunch hosted in his honour by the Chevening Scholars Association. The association, established last year, includes about 50 scholars who have studied in the U.K. under the British Chevening Scholarships Programme. Funded by the British government and launched in

Jordan in 1984, the programme has enabled some 180 young Jordanian professionals to pursue their postgraduate studies in the U.K. During his visit, Prince Edward is also scheduled to attend a ceremony of the Crown Prince El Hassan Awards scheme, and visit the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf School in Salt and the Noor Al Hussein Performing Arts Centre in Amman. The third son and youngest child of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and The Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward is a Patron of the arts and chairs several organisations that support youth in the performing arts.

Turkish rivals signal alliance

ANKARA (AP) — The two rivals of Turkish politics have signalled a willingness to put aside their animosity and join in an alliance to govern Turkey until elections in April, reports said Friday. Party leaders are engaged in intense negotiations to form a new government since Parliament toppled Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz' 17-month-old government in a no-confidence vote Wednesday over a Mafia scandal. No party has a majority to

govern alone in the deeply fragmented parliament, and an alliance between pro-secular parties that would exclude a pro-Islamist party is a must to avoid a possible confrontation with the military. Both Yilmaz and his political rival, former premier Tansu Ciller, declared themselves ready to cooperate. Mrs. Ciller on Thursday declared herself "open to proposals." "We can move together in certain issues," the Milliyet newspaper quoted Yilmaz as saying Friday.

President Suleyman Demirel was expected to conclude consultations with party leaders to piece together a coalition on Friday. The first signs of a possible cooperation came last week when both Mrs. Ciller and Yilmaz had their parties block corruption probes into each other. Both head centre-right parties with similar ideologies. Their animosity stems from a struggle to win ground among the same electorate. (Continued on page 12)

Regent opens parliamentary session today Four deputies compete for House speakership

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
AMMAN — One more contender for the influential Lower House speakership has withdrawn from the race, leaving a less-crowded floor for four prominent deputies who will be competing for the one-year post today. Deputy Mohammad Oran of the opposition bloc pulled out of the race on Thursday. Ahmad Innab and Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh earlier opted not to run. The remaining contestants are incumbent Sa'd Hayel Srour, former industry and trade minister Ali Abul Ragheb, former Ambassador to the U.S. Abdul Hadi Majali and Islamist deputy Abdullah Akaleh. Deputies and observers believe Srour, Abul Ragheb and Majali stand the best

chances. They also expect the tough battle to end after a second round of voting since the winner in the first round should obtain half the votes of deputies present plus one. While noting that allegiance to any one candidate is not set in stone, deputies say Srour, the longest serving speaker who so far held the post for four consecutive terms, is backed by his 18-member Democratic Solidarity Bloc and most of the 10-member National Bloc. The 13-member Parliamentary Alliance Bloc and the 10-member Parliamentary Action Bloc is supporting Abul Ragheb, while Majali is counting on the 14-member Al Wifaq Bloc and other lawmakers. Oran's withdrawal from the battle will most probably help Abul Ragheb obtain

additional votes from the 10-member "opposition bloc." His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, will inaugurate the second ordinary session of the 13th Parliament today. He will deliver the Speech from the Throne at a joint session of the 120-seat bicameral chamber, which will be followed by the election of the House speaker and the House Bureau (first and second deputies and two assistants). Parliament's first tasks include discussing and voting on the 1999 fiscal budget. The budget debate is considered by many as a "second" vote-of-confidence session in which the government presents its fiscal policy after listening to the demands of deputies.

King spearheading efforts to end domestic violence

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein has asked this government and the one before it to prepare amendments to current laws to address and ratify legal contradictions in the judicial process concerning violence against women, official sources said Friday commenting on a Thursday march by 300 women and children against domestic violence. During the opening of the 13th Parliament last November, the King made a passionate plea for Jordanians to shun violence against women and children and called for paying adequate attention to end their suffering. The King noted that women were still exposed to inhuman practices that deprive them from their basic and essential rights. He told Parliament then: "We must pay serious attention to some of the dangerous phenomena that remain a source of women's suffering, and

which, unfortunately, constitute an inhuman violation of their basic rights." During a meeting with the Diplomatic Women's Club of Amman in May, Her Majesty Queen Noor spoke about crimes of honour and said that Jordan is making every effort possible at all levels to address these crimes, which are "not consistent with our Constitution or our Islamic faith." Queen Noor's constant advocacy with the government to amend the law has included calls for clearer moral and legal definition of what would constitute a crime of honour, and what hinders the judiciary from tough sentencing of perpetrators. HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, made similar pleas during a meeting recently with tribal leaders, calling on all people concerned to work towards ending crimes of honour. HRH Princess Basma also called for ending of violence against women in Jordan last week during

the official inauguration of a regional campaign, stressing that the Jordanian society must face issues of violence against women instead of pretending such problems do not exist in the country. HRH Princess Basma Bint Ahi, led Thursday's march in which participants wore T-shirts and held umbrellas that bore the campaign's slogan, "A Life Free of Violence: It is Our Right." The marchers, walked arm in arm the two-kilometre distance between the General Federation of Jordanian Women headquarters on the Fourth Circle and the Amra Hotel on the Sixth Circle, where the event ended. President of the Federation Nojoud Fawzi told the marchers at Amra Hotel, that "it is time we reject violence against women in all its forms. Violence against women is a violation of their human dignities and the most extreme form of discrimination against them," Fawzi told the gathering. She added: "Violence against

women, such as forced marriages, divorce, rape, discrimination, murder and deprivation of custody of their children, work, inheritance, wages and education, are all horrible crimes against women." The march is one of many activities of a regional campaign aimed at eliminating violence against women. The campaign is organised by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and was officially launched by HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal on Nov. 22. UNIFEM Regional Programme Advisor Haifa Abu Ghazaleh said at Amra Hotel: "It is time for Arab and Jordanian women to become free from all forms of violence especially that 11 Arab countries, including Jordan, have signed or ratified the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)." Eighteen women were reportedly killed in the Kingdom this year in the name of family honour. Annually, around 25 women are

killed by male relatives for alleged "immoral behaviour." The campaign commemorates the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights with its historic recognition of "Women's Rights are Human Rights." It is part of a global campaign designed to highlight the achievements of women and to shed light on the obstacles impeding the advancement of their cause. Other activities that will take place during the coming days in Jordan include a drawing and essay competition for school children on the topic of domestic violence in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and a roundtable to launch a recent study on violence against women in collaboration with the Human Rights Forum for Women. Similar activities are also taking place in four other countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen.

Shin Bet tells Netanyahu to free more Palestinians — report

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's secret service has urged the government to reverse its policy and free Palestinians jailed for political violence, the Haaretz newspaper reported on Friday.

Shin Bet, the domestic intelligence agency, warned that continued refusal to free the prisoners was undermining support for the peace process even among moderate Palestinians, it said.

Under the Wye River land-for-security agreement signed with the Palestinians last month in Washington, Israel agreed to free 750 of the some 3,100 Palestinians held in its jails.

But when the first batch of 250 was freed last week, Israel included 150 common criminals in the group, infuriating the Palestinians who insisted the Wye accord

applied only to the 2,250 prisoners held for their political activities.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the Palestinians' reading of the agreement and reaffirmed this week that he will release no prisoners convicted of attacking Israelis or any members of the Islamist group Hamas — about 1,000 of whom are jailed in Israel.

According to Netanyahu, this rules out the release of all but a handful of the political detainees, forcing Israel to free common criminals to meet its obligations under the Wye accord.

Netanyahu's stance notably means he will not free hundreds of members of the Fatah movement founded by Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestinian National Authority and co-signatory of the Wye

accord.

The fate of Palestinians held in Israel's jails is among the most emotional in the peace process and Netanyahu's tough stand drew not only sharp protests from Palestinian officials but sparked angry street demonstrations around the occupied territories.

On Thursday some 300 Palestinians clashed with Israeli troops near the West Bank town of Jenin during a protest over the prisoner issue.

According to Haaretz, Shin Bet officials are especially worried that the prisoner dispute has angered many Fatah members, who provide the core of popular support for both Arafat and the Oslo peace process in general.

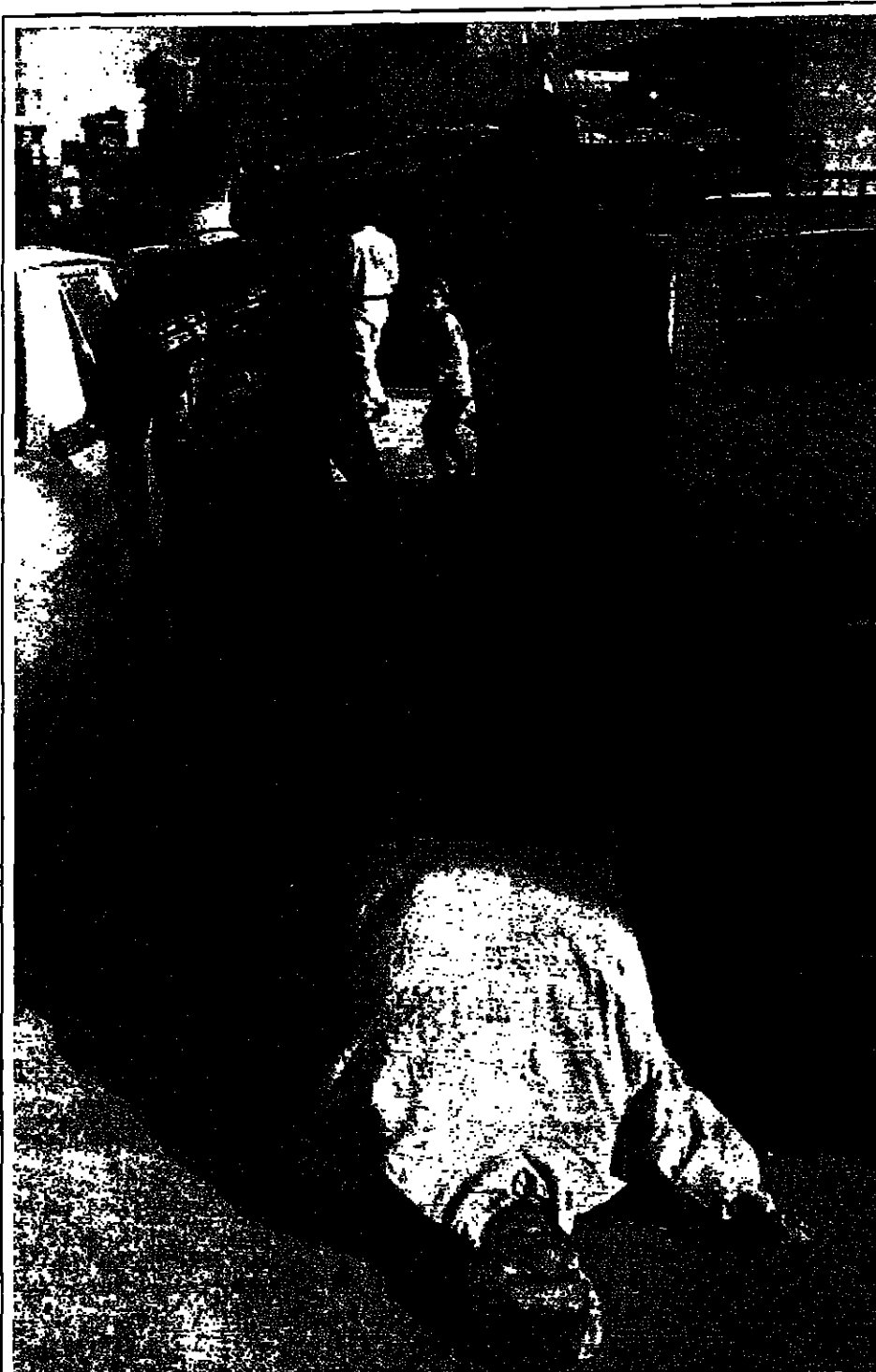
"The longer their hopes for the release of their comrades, who have been locked up in Israeli jails since before the

Oslo agreement, are frustrated, the greater the danger they will disassociate themselves from Arafat and resume terrorism," Haaretz said, quoting the Shin Bet argument.

Palestinian groups have called new demonstrations and a general strike Sunday over the prisoners and Israelis fear the actions could prompt more violence.

Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails have also launched a hunger strike which they threaten to pursue to the death if Israel does not begin releasing political detainees.

The security officials' view is that the release of prisoners is more important to the Palestinian public than the transfer of additional West Bank land to Palestinian control which has been viewed as the core element of the Wye accord.



CLINTON EFFIGY DRAGGED: Two Palestinians drag a dummy of U.S. President Bill Clinton in the Palestinian refugee camp in Sidon in south Lebanon on Friday. About 300 Palestinians demonstrated at the camp to protest arrests in the areas controlled by the Palestinian National Authority (AP photo)

Iran says Americans attacked last week were businessmen

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran on Friday disclosed that a group of Americans who were attacked by militants last week were members of a business delegation exploring investment opportunities.

The acknowledgement by Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi constituted the first official description of the 13 Americans, who left the country a day after the attack Saturday.

They were travelling in a bus in Tehran when activists chanting "Death to America" and wielding iron bars hurled stones at the vehicle, smashing windows and injuring some of the occupants.

Until now, Iranian officials had maintained that the Americans were tourists.

The attack is believed to have been triggered by reports in hardline newspapers accusing the visitors of being members of the Central Intelligence Agency posing as tourists.

Asefi said the Americans were allowed into Iran to increase pressure against U.S. sanctions that ban American companies from investing in Iran.

"Iran will use all possible means to increase public awareness, as it welcomes the activities of foreign companies, including American companies, against the U.S. sanctions," the official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Asefi as saying.

But he said that allowing the Americans did not soften Iranian resolve against resuming diplomatic relations with the United States.

Asefi said the Foreign Ministry had initially denied the presence of the U.S. delegation because the visit had not been coordinated with it. He did not identify the businessmen further.

On Thursday, President Mohammad Khatami condemned the attack as "an affront to the honour of the Iranian people." U.S. officials in Washington denied that any of the Americans were government officials or had links to the CIA.

The Fedayeen Islam, a hardline Islamist group that was dormant for many years, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

"This was an operation against U.S. spies and a warning to the officials who invited them," the group said in a statement Monday. The warning appeared to refer to Khatami's call for cultural exchanges between the United States and Iran.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Khatami reaffirms support for Hizbollah

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami reaffirmed Tehran's support for the Lebanese Shiite Hizbollah movement Thursday in a message to its leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the Iranian news agency said. "As Iran considers the Hizbollah as an independent movement emanating from within the Lebanese community, it will continue to support its Islamic and humanistic stances," Khatami said. Khatami, in a meeting with Nasrallah, described the movement as "a pioneer in the struggle against an occupying regime which embodies terrorism and usurpation."

Israel detains three arson suspects

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli court on Friday ordered three ultra-Orthodox Jews to be held in pre-trial detention, on suspicion of setting fire to a flat used by Christians. A fourth suspect was put under house arrest until the trial. In an incident at the beginning of November, a number of masked attackers wrecked and then set fire to a flat in Mea Shearim, Jerusalem's main ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood. The flat was used by three Swiss women, who were thought to be carrying out missionary work aimed at converting Jews to Christianity. A few days later, another flat close to the area, belonging to the son of an ultra-Orthodox family who had left the community, was also wrecked.

'Bonn stalls on helicopter deal for Turkey'

ANKARA (AFP) — The new German government is stalling on a Franco-German \$4 billion bid to sell attack helicopters to Turkey, because it is reluctant to deliver weapons to Ankara, a Turkish newspaper reported Friday. The Franco-German consortium Eurocopter was forced to cancel a planned test flight of a Tiger helicopter in Turkey after the German partner, the Messerschmitt Boelkow Blohm (MBB) company, did not permit the aircraft to perform in the demonstration, the English-language Turkish Daily News said. Eurocopter kept a Tiger prototype in Turkey for 10 days, but was forced to withdraw it without a test flight, the paper reported. The main reason behind the cancellation was Germany's reluctance to sell weapons to NATO partner Turkey, because Bonn fears they could be used against civilians in Turkey's ongoing war against Kurdish rebels, the paper said.

Israeli court orders Arabic on signs

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's supreme court has ordered the state to include Arabic markings on inter-city road signs around the country, officials said Friday. The ruling, handed down Thursday, was in response to a petition submitted to the court by two civil rights organisations representing Israel's million-strong Arab minority. The petitioners complained that while Israel's attorney general had already agreed several years ago to add Arabic to the road signs, the public works authority had so far replaced only 2,000 of the 20,000 signs nationwide.

Cypriot PM refuses to rule out missile deployment in Greece

ATHENS (AFP) — Prime Minister Costas Simitis refused Friday to rule out the deployment in Greece of Russian S-300 missiles ordered by Cyprus which have led to mounting tension between the island republic and Turkey.

Speculation has been rife that the Cypriot missiles would be deployed on the Greek island of Crete instead of the divided east Mediterranean island.

But Simitis insisted "the basic principle is that Cyprus decides" when asked at a joint news conference here with Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides whether the missiles would be deployed on Greek soil.

He reiterated that the missiles' deployment was "not an objective in itself."

Asked whether the missiles would be deployed at all, he said: "It is logical for these decisions to be made [by Cyprus] in contact with Greece, as far as Athens is concerned."

"In this affair and others, the Cypriot government will

decide, and there will be an agreement with Greece," he said as Clerides smiled in approval.

Greek-Cypriot politicians have indicated that the missiles are due for delivery by December at the latest.

But Turkey has warned it will knock out the missiles if they are deployed as planned, saying they threaten Turkish Cypriots in the island's breakaway north and Turkey itself, which lies 64 kilometres across the sea.

Clerides and Simitis said they favoured a reduction in tension on Cyprus as well as the island's demilitarisation, which could lay the foundation for peace in the area.

Simitis would not say whether Cyprus and Greece planned "a goodwill gesture to reduce the tension," stressing that "we shouldn't get ahead of events and make the current negotiations difficult."

"What's important is for everyone to understand that Greece really wants peace in the region and that Cyprus wants to reduce the tension," he said.

Shiite imam reported tortured to death in S. Arabia

NICOSIA (AFP) — A Shiite imam was tortured to death by the Saudi religious police, said the London-based Saudi opposition group, the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights, in a statement issued on Friday.

The committee said Ahmad Ben Ahmad Al Mubalbal, 55, was arrested

and killed recently in the eastern region of Al Hasa, after the religious police accused him of calling the faithful to prayer in a way other than that prescribed in the kingdom.

Mubalbal's family refused to collect his body and submitted a complaint to the interior ministry, said the committee.

Shiite Muslims make up nearly 10 per cent of the Saudi population. The human rights organisation, Amnesty International, issued a report in 1993 criticising "persecutions of religious minorities in Saudi Arabia, in particular Shiite Muslims and Christians."

The report said public and private

prayers by these groups are completely forbidden.

Religious police are allowed to enter private homes "and arrest anyone caught praying, in possession of rosaries, of 'turba' [Shiite prayer beads], pictures of Jesus Christ or Shiite or Christian religious writings," it said.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Animaniacs
15:35 The Adv. of Bush Patrol
16:00 Drama - Neighbours
16:35 Peer Pressure
17:00 National Geographic
17:25 Football match
19:00 New in French
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy - Murphy Brown
20:00 Doc - Art of Design
20:30 Drama - The Pretender
21:10 An ABC Democracy
21:30 Boston Pops Orchestra
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film - "Romancing (The Stone)"
00:15 Twisted
01:30 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:49 Fajr
06:10 (Sunrise) Duha
11:23 Dhuhr
14:14 Asr
16:37 Maghreb
17:58 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweilish, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.
4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.

4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweilish
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to drop slightly and humidity to

rise. Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers particularly in the northern parts of the Kingdom. On Sunday, temperatures are expected to drop further, skies cloudy to partly cloudy, winds westerly to northwesterly moderate, and rainfall is expected in various regions. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, dusty, winds northerly active, and seas choppy.

Min/Max. temp.
Amman 12/22
Aqaba 17/27
Deserts 10/24
Jordan Valley 17/28

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 24 Aqaba 29. Humidity readings: Amman 36 per cent, Aqaba 45 per cent.
Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 10/18
Jerash 12/25
Blood Bank 47/5121
Um Qays 11/32
Madaba 10/23
Petra 10/23
Dead Sea 15/26

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bassem Karadseh 4389200
Dr. Rami Mazzawi 4894788
Dr. Salim Daboul 5812518
Dr. Khalid M'adali 5661144

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Al Salih (02)246858
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Issam 'I Tallawi (09)903469
Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 489487
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directo-

ry assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akhil Maternity 4642411/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmelsani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Munsher Hospital 5667279
Al-Ahli, Abdli 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Munshreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital

..... (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
..... (09)900560
Jbn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
..... (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital
..... (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital
..... (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafces Hospital
..... (02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital
..... (02) 7102831, (02) 7102011
Specialty Hospital (02) 7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital
(03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:50 Tehran (RJ)
08:30 Damascus (RJ)
08:30 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
09:55 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:35 Colombo (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:40 London, Berlin (RJ)
19:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
19:45 Rome (RJ)
22:45 Paris (RJ)
22:50 Lamaca (RJ)
23:30 Gatwick, Aqaba (add) (RJ)
07:10 Bangkok, Sharjah (RJ)

Other Flights
13:05 Vienna (OS)
13:15 Riyadh (SV)
13:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
14:05 Rome (AZ)
18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)
19:15 Frankfurt (LH)
21:35 Cairo (MS)
22:55 London, Damascus (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
01:00 Belgrade (JU)

Royal Wings (RW)
09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
06:30 Beirut (RJ)
07:45 Aqaba, Gatwick (add) (RJ)
09:35 Frankfurt (RJ)
11:30 Rome (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:10 Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
18:45 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
19:35 Lamaca (RJ)
20:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15 Bombay (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
00:45 Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights
06:15 Damascus, London (BA)
06:30 Lamaca (CY)
14:15 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:45 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
19:00 Dubai (EK)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
22:35 Cairo (MS)
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
02:10 Belgrade (JU)

Royal Wings (RW)
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, meets at the Royal Court Prince Mohammad Al Faisal Al Saud on Thursday (Photo by Boghos)

Regent meets with Saudi prince

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Thursday held talks with Prince Mohammad Al Faisal Al Saud, son of Prince Amr Ben Mohammad of Saudi Arabia, on the agenda of a meeting of the International Federa-

tion of Islamic Banks in Amman. At the meeting, the two sides discussed means of further promoting cooperation among Islamic banks as well as issues of common concern to Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Also Thursday, the

Regent received an envoy from Indonesian President B.J. Habibie, who relayed a message addressed to His Majesty King Hussein dealing with bilateral ties and issues of mutual concern. At the meeting, which was attended by the

Indonesian ambassador, the Regent and the envoy, Mahram Hakim, discussed economic relations and challenges facing Asian countries. The Regent expressed Jordan's intent to develop relations with Indonesia and Islamic states.

U.N. fund grants \$2.8 million for reproductive health projects

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) have signed six agreements under which the organization will provide a total of \$2.8 million to support six government-sponsored projects to support a national reproductive health programme. The funds for these projects are included in the

UNFPA's \$4 million assistance plan to Jordan for the years 1998-2002, according to the Ministry of Planning. The reproductive health programme will support the national population strategy, which is concerned with reducing the rate of population growth as a means of tackling poverty and addressing its

adverse effects on the Kingdom's social, economic and environmental situation. Last September, Jordan signed four agreements with the UNFPA worth \$800,000, and the national population committee has already embarked on their implementation in cooperation with the Queen Alia Fund for Social Develop-

ment and Parliament's population committee. The agreements concluded Thursday were signed by the UNFPA representative in Jordan, Planning Minister Nabil Ammari, representatives of the ministries of education and youth and local voluntary and non-governmental groups concerned with population issues.

Air navigation conference opens Sunday

AMMAN (J.T.) — A five-day conference on planning and developing air navigation organised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation is due to open in Amman on Sunday with the participation of 16 Arab and foreign countries. The conference, to be held under the patronage of HRH Prince Faisal, is expected to cover a number of issues concerning air navigation and opening new routes to facilitate air transport in the Middle East. Civil Aviation

Authority Director General Jasser Ziyad said Friday. Ziyad said problems facing air navigation in the countries represented at the meeting and the prospect of creating a technical committee to provide advice in developing the region's airports are expected to be discussed by the delegates. The conference will include several specialised seminars on new technology in air transport, air traffic control devices and the effects of the Millennium

Bug problem on air transport, he added. The delegates will discuss an alternate plan to be applied by the region's airlines in the event a solution to the Millennium Bug problem is not found, according to Ziyad, who noted that issues such as expanding the capacity of the region's airports and increasing air transport operations are also on the agenda. The ICAO, which was founded in 1947, aims to develop the techniques of international air naviga-

tion and to help in the planning and improvement of international air transport. Ziyad said that the delegates will coordinate the region's air navigation programmes with those of the ICAO's international plans. He said Jordan has nominated Rajai Rifai, Ziyad's advisor, to assume the post of head of ICAO's Middle East bureau during the coming meetings, which will also elect a director for the coming five years.

Traditional protocol at Parliament's opening session gradually changing

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — A gold-coloured "throne seat" once used by the founders of modern Jordan at the annual inauguration of Parliament's regular session, is no longer a must, thanks to His Majesty King Hussein, who gradually changed customary traditions.

However, the elegant chair continues to be placed on the highest podium under the copper-domed Parliament building when King Hussein and the Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, deliver a speech from the Throne at the opening of the regular session of both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament.

"Sitting on the throne seat is not part of the Constitution. Therefore, it is up to the King to change any customary tradition," one observer told the Jordan Times. The King is usually received by senior officials, and after inspecting guards of honour, the King heads to the "throne chamber" for a while, then enters Parliament's hall to address the joint session.

During the reigns of both the founder of the Kingdom, King Abdullah, and the late King Talal, and in the early years of King

Hussein's rule, the session of Parliament used to be opened by the King who would declare: "In the name of Allah, and upon his blessing, I announce the opening of Parliament."

The main speech then used to be delivered by the prime minister, while the King sat on the throne seat. According to the Constitution, "The King opens Parliament's ordinary session with a speech from the throne during a session attended by both assemblies... The King can delegate the prime minister or any minister to preside over the opening ceremony and deliver the speech from the Throne," the Constitution says.

Due to the absence of King Hussein, Prince Hassan will open today's session of the 13th Parliament by delivering the speech from the Throne, the fourth time he has done so in 31 years. Prince Hassan opened Parliament on behalf of King Hussein in 1967, 1968 and 1970.

According to Parliament protocol, and when the King enters the hall, the secretary general of the Upper House announces the opening of the session.

As for seating protocol, it has become a custom that members of the Royal

Family are seated on the right side of the podium, while the heads of both the legislative and executive authorities are seated on the left.

In the last two official opening sessions of Parliament, the King changed another customary tradition by wearing a suit instead of wearing the "throne suit" decorated with medals of various orders.

At the end of the speech, the King usually bows and thanks the audience before leaving the hall.

The two assemblies usually prepare their separate replies to the speech from the Throne, and the two speakers read the replies at a later date during an audience at the Royal Palace.

Jordan's Basic Law was instituted in April 1928 by Emir Abdullah. It provided for a consultative council. Jordan's first elections were held in April of the following year. The 1928 document was transformed after Jordan gained full independence in May 1946. A new Constitution was formulated and adopted by the Legislative Council on November 28, 1947.

The current Constitution was written during the reign of King Talal and ratified on January 1, 1952.



PRINCESS TAGHREED ATTENDS ARMENIAN BAZAAR: HRH Princess Taghreed Mohammad on Thursday is escorted by Armenian Relief Society President Roubina-Taline Bannayan at the society's annual bazaar. The exhibit, one of the events marking His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday, includes traditional Armenian lace, hand-made gifts, Christmas cards, pottery and sweets. The proceeds of the bazaar will be used to help underprivileged families and students. Bannayan presented a society shield to the Princess in recognition of her efforts and those of the Hashemites (Photo courtesy of the Armenian Relief Society)

Mu'ta University dissolves student council

Islamist-dominated body 'threatens security of country, university'

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Mu'ta University dissolved its Islamist-dominated students' council because it "threatens to destabilise the security of the university and the country," university President Eid Dhayat said Friday.

Dhayat said the university administration has decided to hold a new students' council election next month in which the one-person, one vote system will be applied, a move he expected will weaken the Islamists in the council.

Dhayat told the Jordan Times that the decision to dissolve the students' council came after the chairperson of the council threatened the dean of students affairs.

"The council has abused campus rules by turning itself into a campaigner for Hamas and other organisations," Dhayat added.

"We will not allow anything of this sort," Dhayat said, referring to a rally during which some students burnt Israeli and American flags in protest against the signing of the Wye River agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis. Eight students were suspended for different terms for planning the rally, while council chairperson Ibrahim Mansi was briefly detained.

according to Dhayat.

He also accused the organisation of misusing council funds.

"The money was used by these students to prepare and distribute tapes propagating the ideology of Hamas and its leaders," Dhayat said.

"The university has a special status because it has a military branch which prepares officers for the security agencies of our country. Those officers should stay away from extremist ideology," he added.

University officials were also concerned about a seminar planned by students' council to which opposition leaders were invited.

"The seminar programme included nothing about Jordan. It only covered Hamas, Islamic groups, the Islamic renaissance and what they [the students] described as the Zionist enemy," Dhayat said.

Meanwhile, the students' council described the university decision as a "new strike" against what they consider a legitimate struggle for their rights.

"The recent amendments... are aimed at undermining student activity, belittling and minimising the role of students and putting an end to the union's march," a council statement issued on Wednesday said.

JTC plans new service by year's end

By Munther Murjan

AMMAN — The Jordan Telecommunications Company plans to launch an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) later this year, including video conferencing between Jordanians and their associates, family and friends in the Kingdom and abroad, an official said recently.

The service will allow business executives to meet face to face with their associates around the world from the convenience of their offices.

"ISDN is likely to be launched before the end of the year, as the current cable lines are ready to handle the service," Mohammad Karmush, JCC deputy director general for strategic planning, said Wednesday.

He said the cost of using the video-phone service will be decided before the

end of the year by the JTC Board of Directors and the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission.

"But it will be affordable for all Jordanians," said another JTC official who requested anonymity.

Customers must purchase the ISDN terminal equipment from the market as JTC is not selling it.

However, such equipment is sold in the United States for over \$700 (JD500), a price that might put the service out of reach of the majority of Jordanians, whose average per capita income stands at JD1,200.

The ISDN is a network service that provides end-to-end digital connectivity to support a wide range of telecommunications services, giving customers the ability to transmit high-speed computer data, text and video.

Videotelephony provides "symmetrical, bi-directional, real-time audio-visual service in which speech and moving pictures are interchanged," said a JTC official.

The ISDN is part of efforts by the JTC to modernise services to customers and boost revenues.

In September, the JTC launched nine new services including call waiting and forwarding, three party services and caller ID.

The JTC installed 81,086 new lines from January to October of this year, but 88,000 more lines are on the waiting list, Karmush said. "We expect the list to be completed by the end of 1999," he added.

Many Jordanians have been waiting for years for telephone lines, and the shortage has complicated the work of many businesses and shops.

Nurses association files court case over alleged slander incident

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Jordan Nurses Association has decided to file a court case against the director of Prince Faisal Hospital over the alleged slander of 12 nurses, an association official said Friday.

Association Secretary General Munir Akel said a Health Ministry committee formed on Nov. 19 to probe the allegations rejected the association's complaint on a technicality.

"The conclusion of the investigation committee did not meet the least of our expectations," Akel said.

A group of nurses filed a complaint with the association about the director of the government-run hospital, whom they claim used derogatory language in describing the nature of their job during a closed meeting for hospital staff.

According to a letter from Health Minister Nael Ajlouni sent to the nurses association Wednesday, the investigation panel rejected the complaint because it did not contain the names of the plaintiffs.

"In the case that the accusations were proved legitimate, the case would be considered an incident of slander, but since the names of the plaintiffs were not included, the complaint was dismissed," Akel told the Jordan Times, quoting the letter from the minister.

Akel said the association omitted the names of the 12 nurses who charged that they were slandered by the hospital director to protect them from possible retribution.

However, Ajlouni rejected Akel's claims and said that after questioning staff at Prince Faisal Hospital, the committee concluded that the accusations were groundless.

Still, according to Akel, one member of the investigation committee confirmed that 11 nurses and the assistant to the hospital director supported the allegations.

"I wonder why the investigation committee would question the nurses and the hospital director if the complaint, as they claimed, was considered null and void," Akel said.

"If anyone feels that he/she was offended by the hospital's director, he/she can take him to court," Ajlouni told the Jordan Times yesterday.

what's going on

PLAY

* "Kind Chemo" (in Arabic) at Hassan Ibn Talal Auditorium, University of Jordan at 7:00 p.m. daily until Nov. 29.

EXHIBITIONS

* The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

* Paintings by Farouq Hassan at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Nov. 29.

* Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.

* Display of Jordan River Foundation (JRF) 1998 autumn/winter collection entitled "Falling Leaves" at the JRF showroom, Jabal Amman (Tel. 4613081), until Nov. 30.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Toronto marks 'King Hussein Day'

TORONTO (Petra) — The municipality of Toronto announced Thursday that Nov. 24 will be observed as His Majesty King Hussein Day in the city. The announcement said: "In appreciation of King Hussein's distinguished commitment to diplomatic and peaceful means to achieve a settlement in the Middle East, the Municipal Council has decided that Nov. 24" will henceforth be observed as King Hussein Day.

Regent congratulates Mauritanian president

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, sent a message Thursday to Mauritanian President Moukhywa Soudi Ahmad Taya'e congratulating him on his country's national day. Prince Hassan wished the president continued good health and the Mauritanian people further progress and development.

12 Arab Israelis injured in accident

AMMAN (J.T.) — Twelve Arab Israelis were slightly injured in an automobile accident on the road between Ma'an and Aqaba on Wednesday while en route for Saudi Arabia to perform umra, the Arabic daily Al Dustour reported Thursday. The injured resumed their journey after being discharged from a Ma'an hospital.

Cosmetics expo opens Monday in Gaza

GAZA (Petra) — Jordan's commercial centre in Gaza will open a cosmetics exhibition on Monday at the Gaza Chamber of Commerce. The centre's director, Adnan Azab, Friday said nine Jordanian companies will take part in the event. He added that similar activities will be held in various cities in the West Bank.

دولت اسلامی

Supreme court censures Kumaratunga over vote suspension

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's Supreme Court Wednesday censured President Chandrika Kumaratunga for using a state of emergency to postpone key local elections and restore the vote.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice G. P. S. de Silva said the president had no power to nullify notices calling the elections for Aug. 28 last year using the tough public security ordinance.

The court also ordered 30,000 rupees (\$441) as legal costs to two members of a media organisation which charged that their fundamental right to free expression had been violated by the indefinite postponement.

Kumaratunga declared a nation-wide state of emergency in early August and used the extraordinary laws to indefinitely postpone elections to the North-Central, Central, Western, Uva and Sabaragamuwa councils.

A media rights activist, Sunanda Deshapriya, who

challenged the poll postponement said they were vindicated and pleased the supreme court upheld that the right to vote amounted to free expression.

Kumaratunga who has immunity against legal action was not cited as a respondent but the judges said the defendants, including elections chief, tried to take over under an invalid order made by her.

"The constitution assures him (elections commissioner) independence, so that he may fearlessly insist on due compliance with the law in regard to all aspects of elections — even, if necessary, instituting legal proceedings."

"But the material available to this court indicates that he made no effort to ascertain the legal position, or to have recourse to legal remedies," the judges said in their unanimous ruling.

The censure for both the elections chief Dayananda Dissanayake and the president compounded the allegations of large-scale vote rigging at Monday's elections to a sixth provincial council in the North-West of the country.

A battery of ministers led by Aviation Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake

Wednesday defended the ruling party's victory at the polls that were marred by violence but declined to comment on the supreme court ruling.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) had accused the government of postponing the elections out of fear of losing them.

The UNP, which was restricted to 19 seats in the 52-member North-Western Council Monday said they would boycott the sittings and file action to have the violence-marred election nullified.

Kumaratunga last week announced, however, she was prepared to hold the elections to the five councils but has not given fresh dates.

"What the court said today is that no one, not even the president, has the right to interfere with the people's freedom of expression," Deshapriya said. "From a media point of view this is a major decision."

The supreme court Wednesday ordered the elections commissioner to announce the holding of the delayed provincial council elections within three months. Provincial councils are the highest level of local government in Sri Lanka.

U.K. rules out halting N. Irish prisoner releases

LONDON (R) — Britain Wednesday rejected calls to halt the early release of jailed Northern Ireland guerrillas as a means of combating a spate of "punishment beatings" belying the peace the province is supposedly enjoying.

Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam said she did not believe the fragile peace process would survive if she slowed down a scheme agreed in a landmark accord nine months ago to free convicted Protestant and Republican guerrillas before they had completed their jail terms.

Northern Ireland police have logged some 28 shootings and beatings since Jan. 1 which they say were carried out by headline pro-Irish Republican and pro-British loyalist activists. They met out summary justice to those in their own community deemed guilty of thieving or other "anti-social" behaviour including involvement in the drugs trade.

Britain's opposition Conservative leader William Hague is to lead a debate in the

London parliament Wednesday calling for the prisoner release scheme to be slowed down "as a political sanction against a cynically and centrally organised regime of increasingly brutal intimidation."

Almost 240 guerrillas have been released since late last year under the scheme. They belong to paramilitary groups that have called ceasefires in the 30-year-long violent struggle over British rule in Northern Ireland.

Mowlam told BBC radio that stopping the releases would be against the spirit and content of Northern Ireland's Good Friday political agreement.

"I'm not sure legally I can do what he (Hague) wants. I don't believe that if we stopped accelerated releases that the leverage he talks about is there. If I unilaterally pulled part of it out, I don't believe the peace process would survive," she said.

She said punishment beatings had been part of daily life in the province for the last 30

years. "We are doing everything we can to deal with them. He (Hague) assumes that if we stopped prisoner releases they would stop. What evidence does he have of that?"

The latest victim was a 20-year-old man who was found Tuesday night in a west Belfast street with gunshot wounds to his hand and leg.

Mowlam said she would take action against specific paramilitary groups if she had concrete evidence of their involvement in such beatings. But she acknowledged that ordinary people in Northern Ireland were often too terrified or intimidated to report their suspicions to police.

"What we are trying to do with the Good Friday agreement is to try and deal with those underlying problems and find an alternative way forward. No one said it would be easy. These judgments are very tough. But I believe we are making more progress this way than in the last 30 years," she said.

Negotiators working to ban 'dirty dozen' chemicals

NAIROBI (AFP) — International negotiators are drawing up a treaty in Nairobi to ban the "dirty dozen" — 12 highly toxic and resistant chemical products used throughout the world.

The representatives of some 100 countries are meeting all this week at the headquarters of the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) in a leafy Nairobi suburb with the aim of presenting the treaty to governments in 2000.

The products, all based on carbon, were developed 40 or 50 years ago as the chemical industry expanded, explained Jim Willis, director of UNEP Chemicals.

"They were manufactured to have a very long life," he told AFP. "But what made them so successful 40 or 50 years ago makes them that much worse today now that their noxious properties are known."

Among these persistent organic pollutants, or POPs, are dioxins, DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls).

"Once emitted, POPs remain in the environment for a very long time, accumulating in fatty tissue of living organisms," UNEP says. They can thus affect the health of human beings and animals, particularly fish, birds and whales.

Ecologists, who have nicknamed these POPs the "dirty dozen," blame them for provoking malformations in marine mammals and reproductive problems in human beings.

"The final goal of the negotiations is to halt the emission of these substances," Willis said. "But for some products, this is going to be very difficult."

DDT, in particular, poses a complicated problem. Long banned around the world as a general pesticide, it is still used extensively to kill mosquitoes in countries affected by malaria, which causes about a million deaths a year, mainly in Africa, the United Nations says.

"We don't want to cause a public health crisis, and for the moment there is no alternative to DDT," Willis said.

He raised the prospect of developing other methods to fight malaria, for which no vaccine exists.

PCBs are widely used in electrical transformers in the Third World. In theory, they are hermetically sealed inside the transformer, but in practice "you can have leaks, and the risk of explosions," Willis said, adding that tens of thousands of tonnes of PCBs were currently in use.

Dioxins and furans also pose a "very ambitious challenge," he

said. These extremely toxic chemicals can be produced by the incineration of medical or municipal waste, and by forest fires.

Western countries, bowing to pressure from ecological movements, have recently banned the production of some POPs, such as chlordane, "but their manufacture has been taken up by other countries, because demand continues," Willis said.

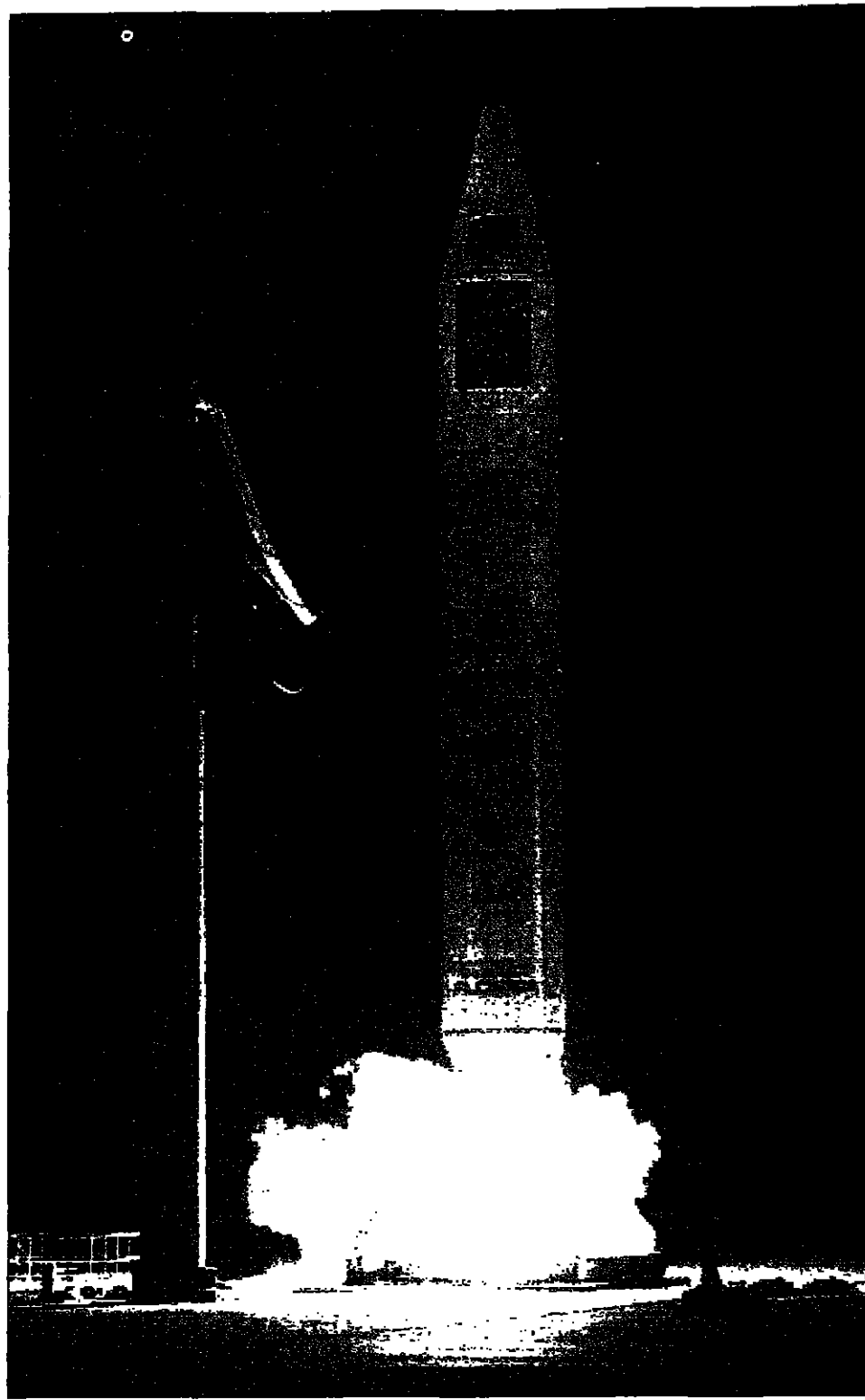
The negotiations, still at an early stage, have not yet provoked any major disagreements.

"But developing countries will need aid and money to take the necessary measures," Willis stressed, adding that arguments could arise when the debate turns to finances.

Funds have been made available to identify other chemicals to add to the current list of 12.

The negotiators are also looking at pesticides, and toxic wastes which are improperly disposed of, which make their way into the water table — a problem of particular concern for Third World countries.

The 12 products the negotiators want to ban are: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, dioxin, endrin, furans, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, PCBs and toxaphene.



Taiwan's first satellite is launched into orbit atop a U.S. Lockheed Martin Athena 1 rocket Jan. 26. The short, pencil-like booster lifted off from Cape Canaveral Air Station in Florida. Taiwan's Rocsat-1 satellite, weighing 402 kg, was released into a circular orbit just over an hour after liftoff. The \$100 million, two-year mission is designed to kick start Taiwan's fledgling space industry (Reuters photo)

Taiwanese satellite in orbit

TAIPEI (AFP) — A Taiwanese-owned science satellite was put into orbit Wednesday about half an hour after lifting off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, taking the island a step closer to its space dream.

The ROCSAT-1 satellite, the first fully owned by the island, was launched at 0034 GMT, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the United States said.

It entered orbit 600 kilometres above the earth 31 minutes and 38 seconds after liftoff.

"The first signals were received here at 11:16 a.m. (0316 GMT)," Chang Yung-Ying, head of a ground control station at Chung Yuan Christian University, northern Taiwan, said after the satellite passed the island.

"We also sent the first directive (to the satellite) at 11:17 a.m. (0317 GMT). The entire communication runs well."

Another ground control station, in the southern city of Tainan, and a backup station in the African state of Mauritius, also reported normal operation of the satellite.

Most of the data "we received as of now showed ROCSAT-1 is in good shape," said an elated Wang Hung-Chih, deputy director of the National Space Programme Office (NSPO).

But it will take another two days to confirm the final success of the launch, Wang added.

Designed by TRW Space and Electronics Group of the United States, the 410 kilogramme satellite was carried into space by a six-tonne Lockheed Martin Athena rocket.

The rocket bore the logo of the nationalist island's flag and a huge painting of a Taiwanese teenager.

"This was a moment of victory," Vice President Lien Chan said after watching the launch images at a mission control room in Hsinchu, 80 kilometres south of Taipei.

"It marked a milestone in our efforts to build up our space technology and truly deserves our pride," Lien said.

"It was the first satellite which our fellow countrymen participated in the entire process, from design to manufacturing and testing," he said.

ROCSAT-1 is powered by a solar panel made by Taiwan's Shihlin Electric and Engineering Corp. and equipped with a computer built by local firm Acer Serenik Inc. Three other major components were made by local companies.

The satellite was carrying an ocean-color imager, an experimental communications payload and ionospheric plasma electrodynamics instruments.

Huang Chen-Tai, chairman of the National Science Council (NSC) which supervises NSPO's operation, ruled out the possibility

of ROCSAT-1 and the future satellites being used for military purposes, saying that was "pure speculation."

But in a dispatch from Cape Canaveral, the China Times reported concerns raised there by reporters the next satellite which is more sophisticated than ROCSAT-1 could be used to spy on rival China.

The paper said the second satellite to be launched in 2002 would be capable of tracking objects on the earth measuring only two meters in length.

In its editorial, the paper also hailed ROCSAT-1 saying "it ought to help make a breakthrough in national defence while marking a stride forward in projects like research on the ocean near Taiwan, land planning, and on weather and agricultural research."

ROCSAT-1, which has a life span of a year, is scheduled to spin around the earth 15 times daily.

Taiwan in October 1991 launched a 15-year space programme at an estimated cost of 13.6 billion Taiwan dollars (\$421 million).

The island also aims to put into orbit eight micro-satellites weighing about 40 kilogrammes each.

A 50-50 joint venture communications satellite with Singapore was launched in late August 1998 and began commercial service. The venture costs \$240 million.

Most Cambodians favour putting Khmer Rouge on trial, poll shows

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — More than 80 per cent of Cambodians want leaders of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime to be prosecuted, according to results of an opinion poll released Wednesday.

However an official for the Paris-based research and statistical body IFRASSORC admitted the group had links with the opposition party of Sam Rainsy, raising questions over the credibility of the findings of the survey.

The 1,503 respondents in the poll, also gave an overwhelming vote of 78 per cent in favour of prosecuting those responsible for political killings after Pol Pot's regime ended in 1979, echoing Sam Rainsy Party policy.

A local official for IFRASSORC — which describes itself as "independent" — revealed why the poll also raised the question of crimes committed under successive governments that included

current Prime Minister Hun Sen.

"We are not part of the Sam Rainsy party, but they are our friends," said So Sokheng.

Dissident Sam Rainsy has supported the examination of crimes spanning 1975 to 1998 period, which covers the Pol Pot regime ousted in 1979 followed by successive governments that included current Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Questions in the survey exclusively posed questions on the two periods, and ignored the demands of Hun Sen for a starting point at 1970 — encompassing U.S. carpet bombing — and the culpability of foreign backers of the Khmer Rouge.

IFRASSORC's So Sokheng also added the Sam Rainsy party spokesman — a U.S. national — helped compile the questionnaire and its results.

Nevertheless, the poll results did show an overwhelming yes-

vote in favour of putting leaders of the Khmer Rouge — blamed for the deaths of two million — on trial, in the latest albeit flawed contribution to the thorny debate surrounding the issue.

Results show support was consistent across both the male-female and urban-rural divide, with rebel accountability backed by 81 per cent of women, 87 per cent of farmers, 83 per cent of factory workers, 87 per cent of civil servants and 81 per cent of taxi drivers.

An average of six per cent answered no, while 13 per cent said they had no opinion.

Debate over a trial has been heating up since last month's defection to Phnom Penh of two top Pol Pot-regime leaders, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, who now live in retirement in the former rebel stronghold of Pailin.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nine Europeans missing in violence-torn Congo

POINTE NOIRE, Congo (AFP) — Nine Europeans, including two priests, have been missing since Monday night in the Dolisie region of southwestern Congo, where the Congolese army and militia loyal to former president Pascal Lissouba clashed Monday and Tuesday, a European source said Wednesday. Missing were five French, a Dane and a German working for the timber company Socobois, as well as one French and one Swiss priest, an employee of a company operating in the area told AFP. Details on the missing and the circumstances of their disappearance were sketchy. The source said he was "concerned" about the nine, adding that the two priests had fled the fighting in Dolisie and taken refuge in the bush.

Belgrade troops clash with Kosovo rebels

LUZANE, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Fighting with small and heavy weapons was under way shortly before 11 a.m. (1000 GMT) Wednesday west of the northern Kosovo town of Luzane, an AFP reporter said. Frequent bursts of small arm fire could be heard and heavy weapons detonations echoed from the hills west of the road connecting Kosovo's capital of Pristina to the northern town of Podujevo. The international truce monitors of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) said from the spot that the fighting had erupted around 8 a.m. and described the weapons as "small arms and grenade launchers and most probably tanks." Northern Kosovo region has been tense for weeks with sporadic clashes between Belgrade's security forces and pro-independence rebels of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

Independence news group warns second paper faces closure

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan's Independence news group warned Wednesday it may have to shut down another newspaper only days after closing the Independence Morning Post. A group owner said the closure of the Independence Evening Post would be inevitable "if we could not get enough money" before Feb. 5. He did not go into details, adding "but we would feel sorry if we have to do so." The Independence Evening Post, first published in 1947, was considered an "opposition paper" in the 1980s for attacking the authoritarian rule of the time and calling for political liberalisation. Talks between staff from the Independence Morning Post, which closed last week, and management broke down Wednesday. Wearing headbands dozens of Independence Morning Post staffers staged a protest in front of the news group's headquarters. "I want cash! Refuse checks!" the protesters shouted while setting fire to a mock check. The staff were outraged after they received checks rather than cash as severance pay from the management last week. Taiwan's labour law requires severance pay to be paid in cash. Despite a 100,000 circulation the Independence Morning Post stopped publication last Thursday due to financial difficulties, making it the first major newspaper to cease publication in recent years.

Pope to star in music video, CD

ROME (AP) — Pope John Paul II is about to star in a music video. Sony Classical and Vatican Radio announced plans this week for the video, saying it will be a spin-off of their joint release of a music CD entitled "Abba Pater." "Abba Pater" will combine "original compositions and arrangements of contemporary musical forms with live recordings of Pope John Paul II delivering prayers, homilies and chants in five languages," Sony said. The CD is scheduled for release in March, ahead of Holy Week and Easter, according to the Vatican. The Papal recordings — in Latin, Italian, French, English and Spanish — were chosen from Vatican Radio's exhaustive archives of John Paul's 20-year papacy. One of the 11 tracks, which features the pope chanting the Pater Noster (Our Father), will also be produced as a music video. The video will be featured on the Vatican Web site and Sony Classical's Web site. The CD cover will be adorned with pictures of the pope, according to Sony. It will come with a booklet that includes the papal texts and more pictures of the Pope. Royalties from the sale of "Abba Pater" will go to Vatican Radio and to Audiovisivi San Paolo, co-producer of the CD and one of the world's largest publishers of religious books and periodicals.

Hindu group casts doubts on Australian missionary's record

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A Hindu revivalist group Wednesday condemned the recent murder of an Australian missionary and his sons in eastern India, but then challenged his record of working with leprosy patients. While denouncing the grisly killing of Graham Staines and his two sons last week, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Hindu Council) rejected the alleged role of an allied militant group — the Bajrang Dal. The Bajrang Dal is in no way involved in the murder. People should stop maligning us," VHP president Giriraj Kishore told reporters. Staines and his sons were killed Friday in the eastern Indian state of Orissa, when a Hindu mob set fire to a car in which they were sleeping. "This act is contrary to the civilisational virtues of Hindu society," Kishore said, calling for a federal investigation into the killings. At the same time, Kishore raised doubts over Staines' record of having worked among leprosy patients in the area for 34 years. "There are no leprosy patients in that area," the VHP leader said. "Leprosy patients exist 100 kilometres away." Both the VHP and Bajrang Dal, which want to turn India into a theocratic Hindu state, have links with the ruling Hindu nationalist party. The killing of Staines and his 10- and seven-year-old sons has been widely condemned in Hindu-majority India. Australia has demanded the immediate arrest of the killers. The police have arrested 50 suspects and are looking for one Hindu militant who allegedly led the attack.

China building fire kills 16

BEIJING (R) — Sixteen people were killed after fire raged through a building under construction in northern China, half of them jumping to their deaths. The Xinmin Evening News said in an edition seen Wednesday. Eight people died jumping for safety, while another eight were burned to death after the blaze broke out at a construction site in Tianjin city last week, the newspaper said. The cause of the blaze was under investigation, it said.

150 من الجاهل



Miss Israel Linor Abargi (C), crowned Miss World, poses with the nine semi-finalists in the competition which was held in the Seychelle Islands. Miss France Veronique Caloc was the first runner up and Miss Malaysia Pich Lim Lina Tech was the second runner up (Reuters photo)

North Korea refuses inspection of suspect nuclear site

TOKYO (AFP) — North Korea Friday angrily rebuffed U.S. pressure for access to an underground complex suspected of being used to revive its nuclear weapons programme.

"We declare once again that our underground facility is not related with nuclear activity and that, accordingly, we will not in the least allow any inspection of the facility," said the Korea Central News Agency (KCNA).

"It is unimaginable that we, regarding our sovereignty as our life and soul,

will meet the U.S. brigandish demand for inspection which is as good as search of our house," said the Pyongyang mouthpiece, monitored here.

The United States has told North Korea the 1994 nuclear agreement could be scrapped unless it opens up the suspect site to inspections.

Under that agreement, the North agreed to freeze its nuclear programme in return for alternative energy including two light-water reactors and fuel oil as well as improved ties with Washington.

The underground site was spotted by intelligence satellites earlier this year in Kumchunri, 40 kilometres northwest from Yongbyon, where the North's already-declared nuclear facilities exist.

Washington has suggested that activity at the site points to attempts by North Korea to revive its nuclear programme.

The U.S. State Department has said North Korea asked for millions of dollars, perhaps as much as \$300 million, to allow a U.S. inspection of the suspect complex.

"We would like to ask the United States why it is refusing to make compensation if it had appalling evidence of our 'underground nuclear facility'," said KCNA.

It said Pyongyang would make an exception and allow the inspection if Washington paid compensation for slander over the issue.

"This is not a gamble but an expression of our fair and open stand that our underground nuclear facility has nothing to do with nuclear activity," said the agency.

Adopted children from California return to Korea for visit

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Erik Reinertsen, a giggly 9-year-old from Los Angeles, loved the hot pickled "kimchi" and everything else about South Korea — the country he left shortly after his birth.

"I am happy that I came back here. I think it's a wonderful place," he said Friday after running around a serene ancient royal palace in the capital of Seoul.

Erik and his 7-year-old sister, Nicole, were among 28 Korean children adopted by families in California, who arrived here Thursday for a five-day visit.

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity. It's always good for someone to feel good about his heritage," said their father, Don Reinertsen.

The children were invited by

first lady Lee Hee-Ho who met them during President Kim Dae-Jung's state visit to the United States in June.

Since the early 1950s, about 150,000 South Korean children have been adopted by foreigners, mostly by Americans.

Friday, the group had lunch with Lee and toured some tourist attractions in Seoul, including Kyongbok Palace near the presidential Blue House.

"I extend my heartfelt thanks to you adoptive parents," Lee told the luncheon meeting. "I also pray that you adopted children will keep growing wonderfully to be members of the mainstream American society."

The homecoming was special for Kim Sunell Brown,

43, who left Seoul in 1956 when he was adopted as a 1-year-old.

Forty-two years later, he has returned — with his own two adopted Korean children.

"It is very important for my kids to be exposed to their heritage at an early age," said Brown, who recalled how hard it was growing up in Nebraska, where there were few Asians.

Brown, an Orange County financial consultant, said he always resented that he knew so little about his family background. All he knew was that his mother was Korean and that his father was probably an American soldier.

And so he was determined to offer his children a better chance to learn about Korea.

Some parents were carrying

Korean language books. At the palace, they shouted, "hurry up," or "come here" in Korean to their children.

JoLee Admich, a 27-year-old lawyer from Los Angeles, who was adopted at 4, said she gradually grew to recognise her roots and now regards herself as a Korean-American.

"I am very glad that the Korean government is recognising that adoptees are Koreans and is trying to build a relationship with them," she said.

Michael Sloan, 14, a Los Angeles middle-school student, was enthralled by people dressed in colourful traditional Korean costume.

"I don't remember any of this. It is new even though I was born here," he said.

India train crash kills at least 165, more than 250 injured

KHANNA, India (AP) — Giant cranes untangled piled up train carriages Friday to uncover more victims — many of the mangled beyond recognition — from the wreckage of a two-train collision, bringing the number of bodies recovered to 165.

At least 10 more bodies were believed buried in the debris, said S.P. Mehta, a general manager of Indian Railways.

Officials said 260 people were injured and about 30 were in critical condition in hospitals across the northern state of Punjab. Teams of doctors operated all night, amputating the legs or hands of some of the victims of Thursday's accident.

Rescue workers, fighting the stench of rotting flesh, tore apart the wreckage to dig out the victims. No survivors have been found since midday Thursday.

"Many of the bodies are badly mutilated. We may

never be able to identify them," said A. K. Kapoor, a top official of the government-owned railroad company who was supervising the rescue operations.

Work speeded up after the arrival of the huge crane that could lift an entire train car. Some 5,000 workers, including nearly 200 army soldiers, supported the wobbly wreckage with planks of wood and steel beams. Others used acetylene torches or crowbars.

The workers cleared and opened one of the two railroad tracks after a 46-hour disruption of traffic on the busy sector, said Indian Railways official S.P. Mehta at this northern wheat-trading town, 250 kilometres northwest of New Delhi.

The second parallel track also was likely to be cleared later Friday, Mehta said.

The Calcutta-bound Sealdah Express collided with cars that had uncoupled from the Frontier Mail

en route from New Delhi and had toppled into the path of the oncoming train on parallel tracks in pre-dawn mist.

A day after the accident, relatives of the victims began arriving in Khanna to identify their kin. The injured were scattered in hospitals and medical colleges, depending on their injuries.

For Ram Praveesh the search ended Friday noon. After endless visits hospitals with local volunteers, he found the body of his father, Ram Nageena.

The 10-year-old boy fainted at the sight of the body on a block of ice at the local college playground that had been turned into a makeshift mortuary.

Ram Praveesh, a native of Bharukpur village in Uttar Pradesh was travelling to Punjab to work with his father on a farm.

Authorities sent messengers to his village to inform his mother and sister.

India records around 300 accidents a year on its railways, the largest rail network under one management in the world. Most are blamed on human error or outdated equipment.

Friday's newspapers said safety recommendations are often ignored in the rush to expand the network, often to please voters. The government-owned railroad company added 500 trains in the last four years.

The worst accident was three years ago when two trains collided near New Delhi, killing 358 people.

The Indian Express newspaper said a flashing light on the engine and last coach of the train — a recommendation of numerous safety committees — might have prevented the accident.

The government has said it has little money for better equipment.

More than 12 million people ride 14,000 trains across India every day on 67,000 kilometres of track.

Senior U.N. official meets Myanmar junta secretary

BANGKOK (AFP) — A senior United Nations official has met Myanmar junta First Secretary Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt in Yangon, U.N. officials and the junta said Friday.

The visit follows reports that the U.N. and the World Bank had proposed a \$1 billion aid lifeline to Myanmar in exchange for genuine political dialogue between the junta and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

A junta official told AFP in a statement that a report this week in the International Herald Tribune was "making everybody jumpy" but it was "premature to make any comment at this stage."

No details of the talks Thursday between Khin Nyunt and U.N. Assistant Secretary General Nay Htun were made public. A source who was present during the meeting said the aid-for-talks proposal was raised but was not the central topic of discussions.

A U.N. spokesman in Yangon said the two probably talked about issues relating to the U.N. Development Programme.

He said the aid-for-talks concept remained a "billion dollar question" and he knew only that the idea had been raised during last

month's visit by U.N. special envoy to Myanmar Alvaro de Soto.

"This is something that has been discussed between the authorities and Mr. De Soto but I don't have any more information," he told AFP by telephone from Yangon.

Nay Htun, who is also director of the U.N.'s bureau for the Asia-Pacific, was due to leave Yangon Friday evening.

Aung San Suu Kyi led the National League for Democracy (NLD) party to a landslide victory in 1990 elections but the junta — the State Peace and Development Council — has refused to recognise the result.

Political talks have stalled over the junta's refusal to negotiate with Aung San Suu Kyi about the formation of the elected government.

The U.N. General Assembly's human rights commission last week sharply criticised "continuing violations of human rights" in Myanmar and called on the government to hold talks with the opposition.

The European Union and the United States, among others, enforce trade and aid sanctions against the junta over its poor human rights record and its refusal to recognise the NLD's election victory.

China asks Japan anew to revise its history

TOKYO (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin Friday warned Japan again to fully acknowledge its notorious war history, during a banquet hosted by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi.

Jiang received only a mild apology from Obuchi during a landmark summit Thursday which was aimed at creating a new platform for relations in the next century.

"In the 20th century the world has experienced dynamic movements and enormous changes and China-Japan relations came along a distorted path," Jiang said, according to the text of a speech released by Japan's foreign ministry.

"Only by learning from the history and preventing reoccurrence of the tragedy can both China and Japan promote a long-lasting friendship."

Obuchi concentrated on the future of Sino-Japanese relations in

his speech at the banquet and made no reference to the oral apology he gave Jiang at the summit for Japan's wartime aggression.

"I'm determined to strengthen relations between the two countries and further cooperation for the peace and development of Asia and the international society," he said.

"We will never neglect making our efforts to enhance the quality of our cooperation."

Japan's wartime and pre-war aggression in China has been a major thorn in relations since they resumed diplomatic ties in 1972.

Chinese concerns over Japan's interpretation of its history have been so strong that Jiang is the first Chinese president to pay a state visit to Japan.

Beijing marked the run-up to the summit with calls for a full apology from Tokyo.

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Resolute tourists return to Luxor

Though some countries still discourage it, tourists from around the world are starting to come back to Egypt after last year's massacre at Luxor, which by some estimates cost the country as much as \$1 billion

By Alistair Lyon
Reuters

RAY AND MADELINE sat on a wall contemplating the majesty of the Queen Hatshepsut temple, where militants massacred 58 foreign holidaymakers a year ago.

"We weighed it up as part of the circumstances of coming here. But we decided nevertheless to, despite what happened last year," Ray said of the Luxor bloodbath.

The British couple watched as tour groups from Germany, Spain, Britain and France wandered round the 3,500-year-old temple, now well-guarded by Egyptian security forces.

The massacre, in which four Egyptians also died, was the bloodiest attack in Egypt since militant groups launched an armed struggle for a purist Islamic state in 1992.

The killings, as intended, devastated Egypt's lucrative tourism industry for a while, but officials and tour operators say recovery is well under way, even in Luxor.

"Our goal is to make the period of recession as short as possible," said Sayyed Mehrez, director general at the tourism ministry. "There has been a strong recovery in the past 10 months. We hope to be back to normal by the end of the year." Mehrez told Reuters that tourist arrivals from January to October were nearly 20 per cent down on the first 10 months of 1997 and the October figure was only 2.8 per cent below October last year.

Without explanation, the government has stopped releasing monthly figures for tourist arrivals since June, when Egypt had 250,000 visitors, compared to 299,000 in June 1997.

Egypt earned \$3.7 billion from tourism in fiscal 1996/7 (July-June), the last year for which figures are available.

Economy Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali has said the Luxor attack cost the economy about \$500 million. A Western economist put the damage at about double that.

"One thing we're seeing is a shift away from the higher end of tourists, Japanese, Swiss and German, who stay at the five-star hotels and are willing to pay more for meals. There is some shift to the lower scale, like Italians and eastern Europeans," the Western economist said.

Egypt has tightened security, organised special events and tolerated deep price discounting to try to lure back tourists to its Pharaonic monuments and Red Sea and Sinai beaches.

"I adore Egypt and there is a lot of security at this moment," said Magali Marti, a Mexican-born tour guide. "The fundamentalists are going to be here for ever, so it (violence) can happen at any time, but I don't have any worries." Immediately after the massacre, tourists deserted Luxor, strangling the livelihood of hoteliers, souvenir sellers, Nile boatmen and many others in this southern Egyptian town.

"We had a lot of problems in the past 10 months," said Egyptian tour guide Ahmed Atris, shepherding a German group around Queen Hatshepsut temple. "We are three or four million people working in tourism in Egypt. Now we are all happy." He said his company was now bringing about 200 tourists a week to Luxor, compared to 600 or 700 before the massacre. "Next year we expect everything will be OK and people will forget." Business is perceptibly better than in those early weeks when drivers of taxis and horse-drawn carriages were coming to blows over who should win fares from the few tourists in town.

"The first three or four months it was completely dead in Luxor," said Abdel-Fattah el-Sherif, local manager of Eastmar Travel. "From May 1 we started our business again."

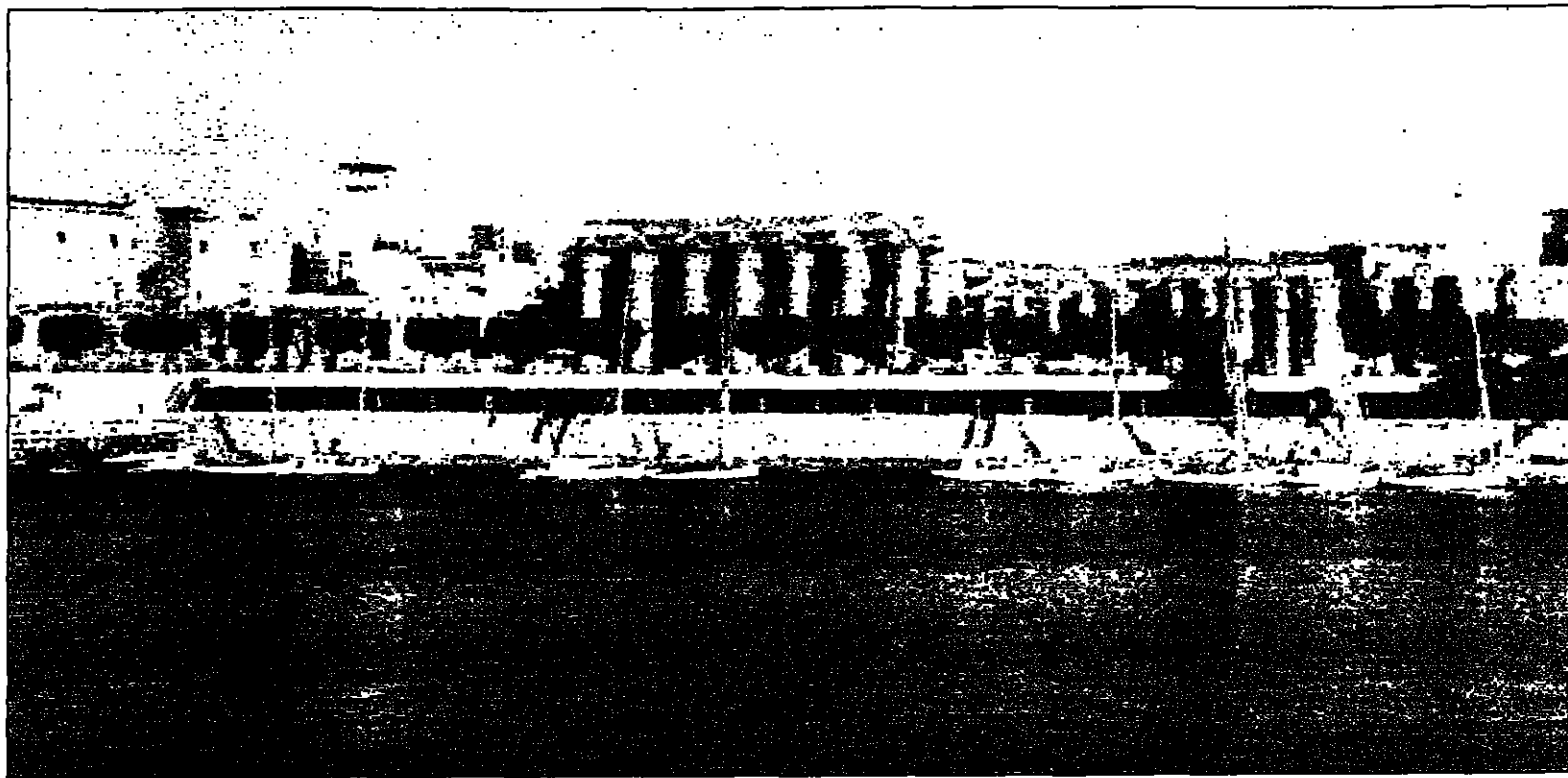
He said tourism in Luxor needed another year to recover. "We have 210 cruise boats, but look at what's working — over 60, but some start just one cruise, then stop for five," he said.

Many European tour operators have not advertised Egypt this year, but charter flights are now picking up and occupancy rates have climbed in Red Sea resorts such as Hurghada or Sharm el-Sheikh at the tip of the Sinai peninsula.

Switzerland and Japan, which suffered the highest casualties in the Luxor massacre, are still advising their citizens not to travel to southern Egypt, though some ignore the warning.

"If you tell someone in Switzerland you are going to Egypt, they say you will be killed. It's terrible what they say," said Alfred Bucher, a former SwissAir steward in his 70s, as he window-shopped in Luxor's Savoy Street bazaar at night.

"We just love it. I have been coming to Egypt two times a year for the past 40 years," he said, adding that he had been in Luxor on the day of the massacre.



A view of Luxor from the Nile. Tourists are starting to come back to Egypt after last year's massacre (file photo)

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"I walk through the streets here and it's fine. But in Zurich I am not going out alone," President Hosni Mubarak sacked his interior minister and Luxor police chiefs for negligence after the attack. Their replacements have implemented an elaborate security plan.

Police and plainclothes agents concealing submachineguns under their jackets lurk on street corners. Soldiers patrol the cliffs that form a striking backdrop to the Queen Hatshepsut temple.

Police chief Mohammed Fouad Rahmo said tourists wanted to feel safe but obtrusive security could make them uncomfortable.

"This is the difficult balance," he said. "Egypt has always been safe and any isolated incident should be treated as such and not be exaggerated because it is against history and the reality of the Egyptian people who cherish their guests." He said that by attacking a pillar of Egypt's economy, militants had shown they were inspired by a sick ideology.

"This diseased ideology is found in a tiny, unpatriotic minority who have nothing to do with the people of Luxor," Jane Langham, a Briton who has lived in Luxor for the past four months, praised Egypt's security efforts and said she felt safer here than in her native London.

"All I can say is the Egyptian authorities are doing more than an awful lot of countries are doing to protect their guests," she said. "So please come back, give it a try." Among those who have done just that are Lorraine Rontree and Nick Crosby from Lincoln, in eastern England. They were trying to reach Queen Hatshepsut temple on November 17 last year, but the carnage was already under way and they were turned back.

"So we never actually got to come back and have another look until today," said Rontree at the temple. Last year's tragedy was "a little off-putting" but had not deterred them.

Smiling Romanian honeymooners Christian and Gabriela Georgescu strolled hand-in-hand down the temple ramp.

"It's just a matter of chance. If you are in the bad place at the wrong moment, it happens. If not, it's OK," said Christian, head of a communications company.

Hassan, selling souvenirs in a row of shops near the temple park, said he was happy to see tourists filtering back.

"Last year, we don't like to remember. Now 50-50 good," he said, breaking off to dive out of his shop to intercept a group of German holidaymakers. "See, tourists, business," he grinned.



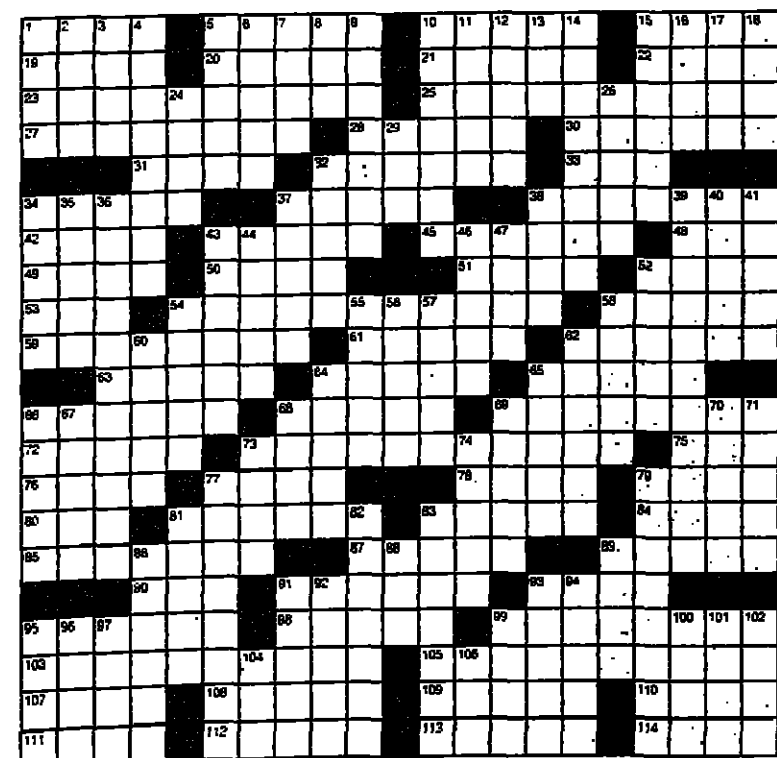
The Karnak Temple complex (file photo)

The Saturday Crossword

JUST DESSERTS

By Harvey L. Chew, Danvers, Massachusetts

ACROSS
87 More free from adulterants
88 Makes alight
89 Guys
90 Sports venues
91 Breezy talk
92 Calamity
93 One-name comic
94 Cloth from flax
95 Document restrictions
96 'A Man and a Woman' star
97 Jazzy
98 Dangling to tragedy
99 Dessert for Peter?
100 White's dessert?
101 Multiple births
102 Cosmopolitan
103 Laundry
104 Tail metal site
105 Lecture
106 Nearly perpendicular
107 Staircase
108 Low-fat
109 Hoagie
110 Promontory
111 "Ocean King" star
112 Abu Dhabi ruler
113 Bound by an oath
114 Taiso superstar
115 Nautical
116 Deadly poison
117 5,280 feet
118 Ship's records
119 Thin coating
120 Arm
121 Dessert for Chicago?
122 Hardly wheat
123 One who makes
124 Greek colonnades
125 Lyric poems
126 Break times
127 Day in the movies
128 Courtyards
129 Palatinate
130 Swiss artist Paul
131 Wood for models
132 Blue or Cross
133 Bridge guru
134 Jazz style
135 Syndicated astrologer
136 Ms. Rogers' dessert?
137 Quiz group
138 Thirst quencher
139 Chromosome unit
140 Ray or Mac
141 U.S. junior's exam
142 Long, narrow inlet
143 Fish head to persuade
144 Dusk-bow migrant
145 Government
146



DOWN
1 Calendar 9
2 Manchurian border river
3 Start of the 3rd millennium
4 Deep blue gem
5 Ballet movements
6 Bee and Em, e.g.
7 Little devils
8 Fragrant neckwear
9 Solid fat
10 Writer's blocks?
11 Employed
12 Atlanta university
13 Weak in numbers
14 Stresses
15 English Channel swimmer Gertrude
16 Church court
17 Fluttery flyer
18 Tan and Irving
19 Swiss artist Paul
20 Wood for models
21 Blue or Cross
22 Bridge guru
23 Jazz style
24 Syndicated astrologer
25 Ms. Rogers' dessert?
26 Quiz group
27 Thirst quencher
28 Chromosome unit
29 Ray or Mac
30 U.S. junior's exam
31 Long, narrow inlet
32 Fish head to persuade
33 Dusk-bow migrant
34 Government
35 Fitzgerald
47 Superman's Lane
48 Ruin
49 Military installations
50 In unison
51 Guitar holder
52 French soldier of WWI
53 Twig with leaves
54 Bombardier
55 Cultural group
56 Cropped into small cubes
57 Comedienne
58 Dances follow
59 Head wrap
60 Hero turned actor
61 Murphy
62 Cash penalty
63 Contemporary of Freud
64 Gumbo ingredient
65 Actor Connery
66 Inarticulate grunt
67 FDR follower
74 Challenges
75 Pope's poppa
76 Fanatically depicted
77 Silvery fish
81 Writer of 'The Faerie Queene'
82 Struts
83 Board a vessel
84 French one
85 Rescue
86 Michael Caine film
87 Long gun
88 Slink
89 Fire truck
90 Equipment
91 Dances follow
92 'La Douce'
93 'Hud' star Patricia
94 Sampras of tennis
95 Wise guy
96 Gumbo ingredient
97 Actor Connery
98 Inarticulate grunt
99 FDR follower

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Reflecting the Change

Unruly OPEC proves unfit to fight oil slump

VIENNA (R) — OPEC oil producers on Thursday turned their back on a crippling price crash, failing to agree any new policy on supply limits to ease the world's huge petroleum glut.

Ministers of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), after two days of stormy talks, could only agree to meet again next March, abandoning plans even to extend existing output curbs in place since June.

"In March we will decide what to do," OPEC Secretary-General Riwanu Lukman told reporters.

Kuwaiti Oil Minister Saud Al Sabah predicted oil prices, already this year at their lowest since 1976, would go lower still.

"This has knocked the bottom out of the market. I

have this horrible feeling we could be getting into single digit prices for a while," said Mehdi Varzi of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson.

North Sea Brent oil on Thursday closed at just \$10.93 a barrel.

"OPEC was famous for digging itself out of trouble but this time it has dug its own grave," commented Bob Finch, head oil trader at Vitol S.A. in London.

Calls from a majority in OPEC's ranks for immediate new cuts foundered on a row among the fractious cartel's biggest producers over the vexed issue of adherence to supply cuts.

Saudi Arabia said it opposed any further reductions because some in OPEC were pumping more than permitted under June's deal, which included producers from outside the

group. OPEC observers say the culprits are Iran and Venezuela.

"The key factor behind this was the deteriorating relationship between Venezuela and Saudi Arabia," said veteran OPEC watcher Mehdi Varzi of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson.

"Saudi Arabia's bottom line is that it wants to retain its leading position in the U.S. market. Other producers caught in the middle are suffering the consequences," he added.

Riyadh has become increasingly concerned that Venezuela's fast-growing oil output, fed by foreign investment in recent years, would force it out of the giant U.S. market.

"Saudi seems to have decided that lower prices are better than losing mar-

ket share," said Nauman Barakat of Prudential Bache in New York.

Saudi and Venezuela were the main architects this year of the surprise Riyadh pact with non-OPEC countries like Mexico to manage oil market supplies.

"Clearly the pact has been destabilised but we don't have a breakdown yet," said Roger Diwan of Washington's Petroleum Finance Corp.

Thursday's OPEC deal, leaving in place output cuts of 2.6 million barrels a day until June 1999, disappointed many OPEC members who had called for tougher supply limits.

"I think we will reduce in March," said Algerian Oil Minister Youcef Youfi after the conference. "I would have preferred to reduce now."

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan

Zanganeh told reporters he saw the need for OPEC to slice another 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) at the meeting on March 23.

But Iran on Thursday also was insisting that the baseline for its own output cuts be raised to higher levels — a bad omen for the March meeting.

OPEC's inability to address one of the worst oil slumps in its history has left depressed oil markets threatening to go into meltdown.

"The market has nothing to hope for now other than a very cold winter," said Leo Drollas of London's Centre for Global Energy Studies.

"This is a catastrophe for OPEC. It's beyond my comprehension," said a senior Gulf oil official.

Israelis negotiating with Royal Jordan to export flowers through Amman

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli Flower Growers Union is negotiating with Royal Jordanian to ship 50,000 tonnes of flowers per year to Europe via Amman because using Israel's state El Al airline is too expensive, union officials said Thursday.

Avraham Daniel, secretary-general of the growers union, told AFP he approached the Jordanians because the Israeli government would not allow his members to ship flowers

aboard El Al planes. "The government is protecting El Al," he said. "Flying our flowers out with El Al costs 20 per cent more than with Royal Jordanian."

Daniel said the growers could save about \$5.7 million a year from their current annual shipping costs of \$31 million by carrying the produce by truck to Amman and then using Royal Jordanian to fly them to markets in Europe.

He said the Jordanians

were willing to meet all the growers' demands.

The Flower Growers Union exports 1.6 billion flowers a year, or about 50,000 tonnes, primarily to the Netherlands and Germany.

Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in 1994. Bilateral trade has failed to develop in line with initial expectations, in part due to Israeli concerns about flood of cheap goods entering the country.

Jordan secures \$110m loan from local banks

AMMAN (R) — Jordan on Thursday signed a \$110 million syndicated loan with local banks in the first domestic borrowing of its size in foreign currency, replacing an earlier shelved debut sovereign bond issue in capi-

tal markets.

Lead managed by Jordan's leading bank, Arab Bank with the participation of fourteen other banks, the loan is set at 175 basis points above LIBOR over three years — a much cheaper rate

than the government would have secured if it had borrowed from the global market or domestically in dinar denominated debt.

Finance Minister Michel Marto told bankers at the signing ceremony that

international global turmoil in financial markets had prompted the government to seek the loan domestically instead of going ahead with a debut sovereign bond issue.

"We were planning to get this loan from an international consortium but the conditions which

the world is passing through makes it the most convenient way to do a syndicated loan in the Kingdom," Marto said.

Emerging market chaos forced the government earlier in the year to postpone its first \$100 million sovereign bond offering which would have established a benchmark for future issues by public and corporate entities which want to tap global markets for cheaper credit.

Marto praised local banks for responding to the government's financing needs in a period of economic downturn on terms which bankers said were attractive for both sides.

"This wide responsive-

ness to subscription in the loan reflects the confidence of local banks in the Jordanian economy and its stability and readiness to finance in foreign currency to the government," said Mifteh Aqel, regional manager at Arab Bank.

The loan aims to meet growing public financial shortfalls by tapping cheap idle liquidity made up of billions of dollars of hard currency held in private bank deposits in Jordan.

Jordan's foreign currency deposits stood at a sizeable \$3.6 billion at end of September — nearly a third of the total JD7.88 billion in private bank deposits.

One banker said if Jordan sought the loan internationally it would have to pay at least 50 basis points above the rate it secured on the deal. Rates on domestic dinar loans would be even higher, with government five-year bonds paying 9.2 per cent.

Exchange Rates Thursday, 26-11-98 ACCESS 4646888

CURRENCY	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1887	0.1927	1.8779	1.8389	0.1844	2.3355	0.2077	0.7000
SAUDI RYAL	5.2980	1.0000	1.0212	5.9491	5.9491	1.0301	12.3734	1.0004	3.7500
UAE DIRHAM	5.1681	0.9793	1.0000	5.7427	5.7427	1.0087	12.1168	1.0778	3.6700
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5325	1.0000	1.0206	1.0000	0.9782	0.1035	1.2437	0.1708	0.2370
QATAR RYAL	0.5438	1.0028	1.0048	1.0212	1.0000	0.1057	1.2700	0.1728	0.2380
KUWAIT RYAL	5.1434	0.9708	0.9914	5.8586	5.8586	1.0000	12.0122	1.0683	3.6415
OMAN RYAL	0.4262	0.9080	0.9825	0.8041	0.7874	0.0832	1.0000	0.0888	0.3032
EGYPT POUND	4.8145	0.9287	0.9280	9.0412	8.8533	0.9361	11.2443	1.0000	3.6600
LIBYAN LIRA	21.4631	4.0548	4.1408	40.3427	39.5055	4.1759	50.1732	4.4621	15.2100
IRAN RIAL	1.4124	0.2686	0.2722	2.6524	2.5973	0.2746	3.2967	0.2934	1.0000
GUINEAN FRANC	0.8515	0.1607	0.1641	1.5990	1.5656	0.1655	1.8888	0.1769	0.6026
GERMAN MARK	2.4100	0.4549	0.4545	4.6228	4.4318	0.4686	5.6286	0.6008	1.7000
SWITZERLAND FR.	1.8524	0.3781	0.3840	3.7414	3.5538	0.3874	4.6531	0.4731	1.4700
FRANCE FRANC	8.0794	1.6350	1.6573	15.1721	14.8573	1.5708	18.9882	1.5781	5.7200
JAPAN YEN	1.7220	0.3250	0.3319	3.2338	3.1657	0.3348	4.0218	0.3877	1.2900
HOLLAND GILDER	2.7187	0.5128	0.5236	5.1016	4.9957	0.5282	6.3447	0.5943	1.9200
SWEDEN KRONA	11.8335	2.1856	2.2423	21.6483	21.3930	2.2818	27.1867	2.4163	8.2300
ITALY LIRA	23.8573	4.5031	4.5984	44.8013	43.8716	4.6386	55.7193	4.9553	16.8900
SPAIN PESA	48.9583	8.3602	8.5788	83.3340	81.3672	8.5652	110.0647	10.3221	34.9200
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2138	0.4173	0.4287	4.1573	4.0711	0.4304	5.1704	0.4598	1.5900
FINLAND MARKKA	4.0435	0.7632	0.7794	7.5832	7.4357	0.7682	9.4425	0.8396	2.8600
CYPRUS POUND	2.8782	0.5433	0.5548	5.4050	5.2928	0.5566	6.7221	0.5878	2.0370
AUSTRIA SELLING	16.9534	3.1988	3.2673	31.8365	31.1758	3.2882	38.5943	3.5213	12.0000
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1638	0.4084	0.4171	4.0834	3.9781	0.4207	5.0538	0.4464	1.5200
EURO	1.2234	0.2309	0.2358	2.2874	2.2487	0.2378	2.8873	0.2541	0.8800

CURRENCY	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.5888	0.5961	0.7069	0.1748	0.8202	0.5199	5.8203	1.1500
GUINEAN FRANC	0.8028	1.0000	0.3533	0.4274	0.1054	0.4845	0.3134	3.5880	0.8800
GERMAN MARK	1.7053	2.8304	1.0000	1.2098	0.2983	1.3985	0.8871	10.1018	1.8800
SWITZERLAND FR.	1.4108	2.3359	0.8287	1.0000	0.2688	1.1570	0.7324	8.5654	1.5900
FRANCE FRANC	5.7202	9.4887	3.3524	4.0852	1.0000	4.8918	2.6740	33.8454	6.8800
JAPAN YEN	121.0200	202.2409	71.4528	86.4313	21.3130	1.0000	61.3678	721.8045	140.7500
HOLLAND GILDER	1.8534	3.1905	1.1272	1.3635	0.3362	1.5776	1.0000	11.3871	2.2200
SWEDEN KRONA	8.2385	13.8277	4.8271	5.6390	1.4389	6.7557	4.2623	48.5207	9.5000
ITALY LIRA	18.8910	28.0188	9.8892	11.9743	2.8529	13.8452	8.7818	1.0000	3.9500
SPAIN PESA	38.1850	58.3648	20.6206	24.9423	6.1510	28.8591	14.2531	208.3062	40.8000
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5674	2.6000	0.9198	1.1112	0.2746	1.3855	0.8148	9.2798	1.8800
FINLAND MARKKA	2.8628	4.7489	1.8778	2.5905	0.6500	2.3481	1.4854	16.9487	3.3900
CYPRUS POUND	2.0378	3.3803	1.1943	1.4446	0.3562	1.6714	1.0595	12.0644	2.3500
AUSTRIA SELLING	12.0030	19.9108	7.0345	8.5091	2.0884	9.8450	6.2405	77.0818	15.8500
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5320	2.5413	0.8878	1.0861	0.2878	1.2598	0.7865	9.0889	1.7800
EURO	0.8882	1.4388	0.5076	0.6140	0.1514	0.7104	0.4503	5.1280	1.0800

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

CURRENCY	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.5888	0.5961	0.7069	0.1748	0.8202	0.5199	5.8203	1.1500
GUINEAN FRANC	0.8028	1.0000	0.3533	0.4274	0.1054	0.4845	0.3134	3.5880	0.8800
GERMAN MARK	1.7053	2.8304	1.0000	1.2098	0.2983	1.3985	0.8871	10.1018	1.8800
SWITZERLAND FR.	1.4108	2.3359	0.8287	1.0000	0.2688	1.1570	0.7324	8.5654	1.5900
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JAPAN YEN	121.0200	202.2409	71.4528	86.4313	21.3130	1.0000	61.3678	721.8045	140.7500
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EURO	0.8882	1.4388	0.5076	0.6140	0.1514	0.7104	0.4503	5.1280	1.0800

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

DEPOSIT INTEREST PRICES					CSJA		US DOLLAR	
CURRENCY	1M	3M	6M	1 YEAR	GERMANY MARK	SWITZERLAND FRANC	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN
US DOLLAR	0.2300	0.2100	0.1900	0.1700	0.1400	0.1300	0.1200	0.1100
GERMANY MARK	0.1400	0.1300	0.1200	0.1100	0.1000	0.0900	0.0800	0.0700
SWITZERLAND FRANC	0.1300	0.1200	0.1100	0.1000	0.0900	0.0800	0.0700	0.0600
FRANCE FRANC	0.1200	0.1100	0.1000	0.0900	0.0800	0.0700	0.0600	0.0500
JAPAN YEN	0.1100	0.1000	0.0900	0.0800	0.0700	0.0600	0.0500	0.0400

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OCA chief in talks on Saudi Asiad participation

NICOSIA (AFP) — The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) is holding talks with Saudi sports officials on sending a symbolic delegation to the upcoming Asian Games in Thailand, a source close to the council said Friday.

Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahed Al Ahmad, the president of the OCA, is trying to persuade the Saudis to relent following their last-minute withdrawal and hopes to convince them to send at least a token delegation to the Games, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Thailand said Friday it would ask the OCA to impose tough penalties on Saudi Arabia for its withdrawal.

The pullout has further soured already bitter relations between Bangkok and Riyadh and angered Thailand's just nine days before the Games opening ceremony.

Jurin Laksanawisit, a minister at the prime minister's office, said the withdrawal "causes difficulties" for the host. Thailand is preparing to raise the issue at the next OCA meeting, especially in terms of punishments.

Officially, Riyadh said the pullout from the Games, which run from December 6 to December 20, was the result of bad timing. The Saudi authorities said the event coincides with the Moslem fasting month of Ramadan as well as Saudi royal celebrations.

Ties between Thailand and Saudi Arabia have yet to recover from the murder of three Saudi diplomats and an official in Bangkok in February 1990, which prompted Riyadh to deny visas to Thai workers.

Games leave European clubs without Asian imports

BANGKOK (AFP) — European coaches are howling complaints about losing new Asian imports at the height of the season to the Asian Games soccer contest.

China have recalled players from England and France, while Iran demanded the release of German-based World Cup players.

After a row with the Asian Football Confederation over eligibility, South Korea and Japan are also using World Cup players in their young teams.

The football, the most watched event, starts Sunday, ahead of the formal December 6 opening of the Games.

China, who lost the 1994 Asian Games final 4-2 to Uzbekistan, have caused most consternation in Europe. Coach Bobby Houghton has brought back former national skipper Fan Zhiyi and Sun Jihai from English first division side Crystal Palace and Li Jinyu from Nancy in France.

Palace manager Terry Venables has led complaints about losing "key" members of his squad to a tournament he has barely heard of.

Venables claimed no mention was made of the Asian Games when Fan and Sun joined the London club this year. Houghton insists Palace were repeatedly told of the event.

China, who start in a group with Lebanon and Cambodia, also wanted striker Yang Chen at Eintracht Frankfurt in Germany.

It took an appeal from China's former German national coach Klaus Schlappner for Yang to be left to establish himself at Frankfurt. "Yang is a great player but he risks losing his place if China insist on taking him," Schlappner warned the Chinese Football Association.

Iran had no mercy for the Bundesliga however, calling up former Asian player of the year Ali Daei from Bayern Munich and Karim Bagheri from Cologne into the 20 players based around the squad from the World Cup finals in France.

Head coach Mansour Pourheidari has taken the squad to Dubai before their first match against Kazakhstan

Asian Games football groups

BANGKOK (AFP) — Groups for the Asian Games football which starts Sunday:

- Group A: Turkmenistan, Vietnam, South Korea
- Group B: China, Lebanon, Cambodia
- Group C: Nepal, Japan, India
- Group D: Tajikistan, Maldives, Qatar
- Group E: North Korea, United Arab Emirates
- Group F: Hong Kong, Oman, Thailand
- Group G: Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Kuwait
- Group H: Kazakhstan, Iran, Laos

on December 1. "Our target has to be gold," he insisted.

Fellow-France '98 representatives Japan and South Korea are also determined to make an impact on the Games soccer, though both are officially taking Olympic sides.

South Korea's team sees five World Cup players including striker Yoo Sang-Chul and playmaker Yoon Jong-Hwan among a soccer creche of mainly amateur college players.

Coach Huh Jung-Moo said he was counting on Yoo to galvanize the team, who are in a group with Vietnam and Turkmenistan. "Many players do not have enough experience. But we can win the gold if they show fighting spirit."

Japan warmed up this week with a 1-0 win over Argentina's under-21 side, thanks to a brilliant lobbed goal from Yokohama Marinos' midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura.

Japan's French coach Philippe Troussier said: "It's great to beat a world-class team like Argentina. We showed lots of heart, which will give us a platform going into the Asian Games."

The team are all under-21 professionals from the J-League, except for 18-year-old student Seiji Kaneko.

The Japanese, who say they are more worried about the Sydney 2000 Olympics, are aiming for a top four finish.

But they will have Urawa Reds' midfielder Shinji Ono, 18, who made his World Cup debut in France. Kashima

Antlers forward Atsushi Yanagisawa, 21, a star in the World Youth Championships last year and 20-year-old Nakamura.

"Our players may vary in age but they all belong to the premier division," Troussier highlighted. "I will attach importance to how we fight, not on a result which may not have a big meaning." Japan start in a group against India and Nepal.

The Asian Games contest has been reduced to 23 teams following the last-minute withdrawal by Brunei.

But organisers decided against redrawing the event, reportedly after big-spending Japanese broadcaster NHK threatened to withdraw if their costly preparations had to be changed again.

So the eight groups remain, with the top two guaranteed a place in the four second-round groups of four teams. The final is on December 19.

North Korea, competing in their first Asian Games for eight years, are assured of qualification for the second round as they are in a two-team group with the United Arab Emirates thanks to Brunei's withdrawal.

Hosts Thailand, who were involved in a stormy warm up match against Qatar, meet Hong Kong and Oman.

First round matches will be played in seven provinces around the country, while all second round games will be played in Bangkok. The two top teams from each second round group go forward to the knockout quarter-finals.

Bangkok police begin city-wide crackdown

BANGKOK (AFP) — Thai police on Friday began a city-wide crackdown on firearms and explosives in preparation for the Asian Games in Bangkok next month, officials said.

A heavy security blanket has been spread over the capital to protect athletes, officials and VIPs from 42 nations.

"It assures foreign visitors and the public that there is tight security leading up to the Games," organisers said in a statement.

The sweep includes nightly roadblocks around the city, and checks on popular nightspots where informers have been enlisted to keep the police up-to-date with the latest intelligence.

Metropolitan police commissioner Lieutenant General Wannarat Kajarak said all police stations had been put on the lookout for firearms and explosives.

Police have already warned they will take tough action against unruly behaviour by sports fans and crowds at the Games, using plainclothes officers to maintain tight surveillance at stadiums.

They also said they will not tolerate any protests by political groups which try to use the Games as a stage to lambast unpopular governments.

Demonstrations will be banned at all Games venues.

South Korea plans to complete World Cup stadiums by 2001

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea aims to finish 10 new stadiums for the 2002 World Cup finals by the end of 2001, Culture and Tourism Minister Shin Nak-Kyun said Friday.

"Stadiums in seven cities, including Seoul, are already under construction," she told the national assembly while giving details of preparations for the 2002 finals, which are being jointly hosted with Japan.

Work on an arena in Chonju will start in January and in Cheju Island in February, she said.

Park Seh-Jik, head of the preparation committee for the World Cup, told the assembly a FIFA delegation expressed satisfaction with the ongoing preparatory work when they visited here early this month.

But Park said the completion of the stadiums must be wrapped up by September 2001 to ensure the event is a success.



Detroit Lions wide receiver Herman Moore (84) is brought down by Pittsburgh Steelers Carnell Lake (37) after an 8-yard gain in the third quarter, in Pontiac, Mich. Moore scored the Lions' only touchdown and had eight receptions for 148 yards in their 19-16 win (AP photo)

Vikings close in on division title

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Rookie Randy Moss came up big in another big game Thursday, hauling in three touchdown catches as Minnesota closed in on the NFC Central title with a 46-36 victory over Dallas.

Moss victimised the team for whom he wanted to play, catching scoring passes of 51, 56 and 56 yards from Randall Cunningham.

Four days after helping the Vikings (11-1) complete a season sweep of the Green Bay Packers, Moss pushed his totals for the year to 47 catches for 1,014 yards and 11 TDs.

Minnesota extended its winning streak to four games, and can secure its first division crown since 1994 with a win next week against Chicago.

The Vikings also can clinch the NFC Central if Green Bay loses on Sunday to lowly Philadelphia.

Cunningham completed 17-of-35 passes for 359 yards and four scores with an interception, overcoming record-setting and record-tying performances by Dallas' Troy Aikman and Emmitt Smith.

Forced to throw often after falling behind, 21-6, Aikman went 34-for-56 for 455 yards and a touchdown. He broke his own team record for attempts, tied his Cowboys' mark for completions and came within six of eclipsing Don Meredith's club record for passing yards.

Smith was limited to 44 yards but scored on three

short runs to tie Marcus Allen's NFL record with 123 career rushing touchdowns.

Dallas (8-4) had a four-game winning streak snapped and suffered its second straight Thanksgiving holiday loss.

The 46 points were the most allowed by the Cowboys in 31 Thanksgiving games. Detroit running back Barry Sanders also reached a rushing milestone, despite being held to only 33 yards on 20 carries in the Lions' 19-16 overtime victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Jason Hanson booted a 42-yard field with 12:08 left in overtime, as the Lions rallied from a 10-point deficit and added another chapter to their November holiday legacy with a dramatic win.

Despite his uncharacteristic performance, Sanders joined Walter Payton as the only players in NFL history to rush for 15,000 yards. Sanders, the top rusher on Thanksgiving Day with 931 yards, raised his career total to 15,003 and is 1,725 yards shy of Payton's all-time mark of 16,728.

Pittsburgh's defence dominated for nearly three quarters before Lions rookie quarterback Charlie Batch shook off a sore neck and ignited the Lions' lethargic offense.

"We knew they were trying to stop the run," said Batch. "They were prepared and determined to stop with 4:33 left after the Lions recovered a fumble on the ensuing kickoff."

take away our run we have to spread them out and beat them with the pass."

The game took a bizarre twist before the overtime, when the Lions won the coin flip. Television replays appeared to have Steelers running back Jerome Bettis calling tails as the coin was in the air, only to have the referee award the ball to the Lions after the coin landed tails.

Referee Phil Luckett said Bettis originally called heads and changed his mind.

"He first called heads," said Luckett. "When it hit the ground, it bounced in tails, and I said, 'You called heads, so Detroit has won the toss.'"

The Lions took the opening possession in overtime and marched 41 yards on seven plays. Coach Bobby Ross sent Hanson out on third down, and after a timeout, the kicker split the uprights.

On first down from the Pittsburgh 48, cornerback Chris Oldham sacked Batch, but the play was wiped out when Oldham was called for a 15-yard facemask penalty. That gave the Lions another first down at the Steelers 33.

Detroit tied the game, 13-13, on Batch's 21-yard touchdown pass to Herman Moore with 6:36 remaining in the fourth quarter and took a 16-13 lead when Hanson booted a 35-yard field with 4:33 left after the Lions recovered a fumble on the ensuing kickoff.

Tunisian club poised to lift CAF Cup

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Club Sportif Sfaxien of Tunisia must feel the highest peak has already been scaled as they seek to lift the African Football Confederation (CAF) Cup at the first attempt.

The unfashionable team from the coastal town of Sfax defeated Jeanne d'Arc of Senegal 1-0 in the first leg of the final in Dakar two weeks ago despite playing with 10 men for 70 minutes.

Midfielder Imed Ketata is automatically barred from the return match at the 25,000-capacity Taieb Mhiri Stadium in the coastal town of Sfax on Sunday after being sent off for head-butting.

Jeanne d'Arc squandered numerous chances before Bechir Ben Ahmed snatched victory with a 70th-minute goal and Sfaxien need only a draw to collect a cup named after the late Nigerian politician Moshood Abiola.

The German coach of Sfaxien,

Erhardt Krautzen, fears complacency and has publicly warned a team that includes 1998 World Cup defenders Sami and Hatem Trabelsi and midfielder Skander Souayah that the club's mission is not yet complete.

"Sfaxien have taken an excellent step forward by laying the foundations for a great triumph, but the trophy is not in our hands and the Senegalese have excelled in away matches," Krautzen said.

"We beat a very good team and silenced the crowd in the first leg because we were compact in defence, patient in midfield and scored at a crucial time."

"However, I have told my players that Jeanne d'Arc achieved excellent results in Gabon, Morocco and Zambia and they have four players I would welcome to Sfaxien today."

The Tunisians warmed up for the second leg with a 3-2 away victory over JS Kairouan in the national

league. Midfielder Rachid Bouaziz scored twice and Hatem Trabelsi converted a penalty kick.

Success for Sfaxien would confirm Tunisian dominance of a cup introduced in 1992 for national championship runners-up. Etoile du Sahel won in 1995 and were runners-up in 1996 and Esperance triumphed last year.

Tradition also suggests a Sfaxien victory as two previous cup ties between clubs from Tunisia and Senegal have produced decisive victories for the North Africans.

Sfaxien boast a home record of four wins and a 14-1 goal tally while Jeanne d'Arc have won twice, drawn once and lost once on the road, scoring five goals and conceding two



Russian skater Ilia Klimkin jumps during his free dance performance at the World junior figure skating championship in Zagreb, Croatia Thursday night November and became World champion (AP photo)

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 463 4144	CINEMA TEL: 463 4144	CINEMA TEL: 569 9233	CINEMA TEL: 567 7420	CINEMA TEL: 593 4793	CINEMA TEL: 593 4793	CINEMA TEL: 593 4793
	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Nishan Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155
	Drew Barrymore .. in MAD LOVE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Michael Gouglas & Val Kilmer .. in THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD "1" FEAR IS IN THE AIR 'TURBULENCE AHEAD' Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD "2" BODYGUARD Shows: 3:30, 5:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Antonio Banderas .. in THE MASK OF ZORRO Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Watch out for the new play

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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE

Amman Little League

Amman — The Amman Little League will hold its annual meeting on Saturday, Dec. 6, 20, because of the withdrawal of the Amman Little League from the Little League World Series. The Amman Little League will hold its annual meeting on Saturday, Dec. 6, 20, because of the withdrawal of the Amman Little League from the Little League World Series.

Jordanian boxer

Amman — Basel Hindawi, one of the best Jordanian boxers, will not be able to compete in the 1999 World Boxing Federation (WBF) World Championships in Amman. Hindawi, who won the 1997 WBF World Championships, will not be able to compete in the 1999 WBF World Championships in Amman.

World fed

2-year ban

Amman — All Jordanian athletes who have been banned by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for doping will be banned for two years from competing in the 1999 World Championships in Amman.

Amman Little League

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LOCAL
SPORTS
SCENE

Amman Little League concludes soccer season

AMMAN — The Amman Little League soccer season concluded Friday at the Amman Baccalaureate School with a prize-giving ceremony for teams, parents and sponsors held under the patronage of HRH Princess Aisha. The event was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Princesses Alia and Zein.

Top Jordanian boxer to miss Asian Games

AMMAN — Basel Hindawi, one of the Kingdom's leading boxing champions, has announced that he will not be able to participate in the upcoming Asian Games, to be held in Bangkok Dec. 6-20, because of financial difficulties. Hindawi explained that the Jordan Boxing Federation has not paid him training expenses for the past three months. With his withdrawal only Mohammad Abu Khadijeh and Ayman Al Nadi, both medal winning athletes will represent Jordan in Bangkok. The unemployed champion, who won the 71kg-category bronze medal at last year's Pan-Arab Games, is one of the country's excellent athletes favoured to clinch medals at next summer's Pan-Arab Games in Amman.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

World federations agree to 2-year ban; FIFA objects

LAUSANNE (AP) — All Olympic sports — except for soccer, tennis and cycling — agreed Friday to a package of measures aimed at unifying the fight against banned drugs.

International sports federations endorsed a single Olympic medical code that calls for a minimum two-year suspension for athletes found guilty of taking steroids and other serious performance-enhancing drugs.

The sanction for a second offense would be a life ban.

In a significant move, the resolution adopted Friday said any federations which don't comply with the agreement could be dropped from the Olympics.

FIFA, the governing body of soccer, expressed reservations about the two-year penalty on grounds that certain banned drugs have no performance-enhancing benefits for soccer players.

FIFA's acting secretary general, Michael Zeff, said he would refer the issue for consideration by the federation's governing board.

FIFA, the International Tennis Federation and the International Cycling Union all objected to the resolution which threatens sports with expulsion from the Olympics if they don't comply.

Soccer, cycling and tennis were the same three sports which failed to comply fully with previous IOC accords on harmonisation of doping rules and sanctions.

But IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch said he was confident the three federations would sign up to the agreement before the world anti-doping conference in Lausanne on Feb. 2-4.

"These three federations

have reservations, but after consulting with their governing bodies, I'm sure they will agree," Samaranch said. "I think all federations will remain on the Olympic program. The policy of the IOC is not to threaten the federations."

Primo Nebiolo, president of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, proposed the last-minute addition of a clause requiring all federations to comply with the terms of the accord or else risk their Olympic status.

The provision reads: "The sports included on the program of the Olympic Games must be governed by international federations which agree to comply" with the agreement.

On other key points, the federations: — endorsed the creation of an independent anti-doping agency to coordinate the fight against drugs around the world

— called for cooperation on doping issues between sports bodies and government authorities

— pledged to intensify doping prevention policies through educational and promotional campaigns

— agreed to refer doping disputes to the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport once internal appeals procedures had been exhausted

The IOC called the meeting of 28 summer and seven winter federations to garner endorsement of common rules, procedures and sanctions.

The IOC was intent on getting the federations to fall into line before the February doping summit. Previous IOC guidelines recommended a two-year ban as a maximum punishment. In some cases, different federations have

applied different sanctions for the same offense.

The international cycling union, whose sport was damaged by revelations of systematic doping during the Tour de France, voiced no objections to the two-year penalty during Friday's debate.

But UCI president Hein Verbruggen said the penalty won't serve much use because it won't be accepted by the legal system.

"The rules have to be in line with what is acceptable to the courts," he said. "If we go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, they will never give two years. It's the priority of law."

You have to look at the consequences."

John Coates, president of the Australian Olympic Committee, said sports should be kicked out of the Olympics if they can't accept the common rules.

"I think athletes in each sport should get the same sanction for the same offense," he said. "There should not be any flexibility in the two years, except for the possibility of additional penalties. If sports can't accept this, they don't deserve to be in the Olympic movement."

On another key issue, the federations expressed support for establishment of a world anti-doping agency to spearhead out-of-competition controls and coordinate drug-testing research.

IOC vice president Dick Pound, who heads the project, said the agency could be up and running early next year with initial funding of \$25 million from Olympic television revenues.

Games snub sparks Aboriginal boycott threat

SYDNEY (AFP) — Aboriginal leaders have raised the threat of an international boycott of the 2000 Sydney Olympics after being left off the organising committee's board of directors.

Louisa O'Donoghue, the Sydney Olympic indigenous affairs adviser, said Friday the threat of a boycott by countries sympathetic to Aboriginal causes, should not be written off.

"Human rights people around the world are already getting in touch about the treatment of indigenous people by the New South Wales government and Games organisers," she said after being overlooked for a position on the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) board.

Marjorie Jackson, double Olympic sprint champion at the 1952 Helsinki Games, was chosen ahead of her to replace Rod McGeoch, a Sydney lawyer who had fronted the Sydney Games bid but who stood down after a political row.

"I am trying to keep the lid on boycotts," O'Donoghue added.

But Phil Coles, one of Australia's two International Olympic Committee members, dismissed the threat.

"Boycott talk has been around for a while, but these threats don't do any good at all," he said.

"I just can't see African or Asian countries boycotting the Games."

SOCOG's national indigenous advisory committee which O'Donoghue chairs, was set up last year after several Aboriginal leaders threatened to boycott the Games.

But O'Donoghue said SOCOG was not doing enough to pressure the IOC into allowing the Aboriginal flag to be raised at the opening ceremony and involving Aboriginal workers in the Games.

SOCOG has picked Nova Peris-Kneebone, a 1996 Olympic hockey champion and 1998 Commonwealth Games sprint champion, to begin the Australian leg of the torch relay at Ayer's Rock, also known by its traditional name of Uluru. But Aboriginal leaders claim this is mere tokenism.

Sampras stays No. 1 for record sixth year

HANOVER (AP) — Pete Sampras is on top of the tennis world for a record sixth consecutive year and he is not ready just yet to relinquish his throne.

"I'll try to stay on top for as long as possible," Sampras said after breaking the record of five years he held jointly with Jimmy Connors.

There are new milestones to achieve as well: Sampras is one title short of the 12 Grand Slams won by Roy Emerson.

And there is the French Open on clay, the only one Sampras hasn't won. "That's the biggest challenge."

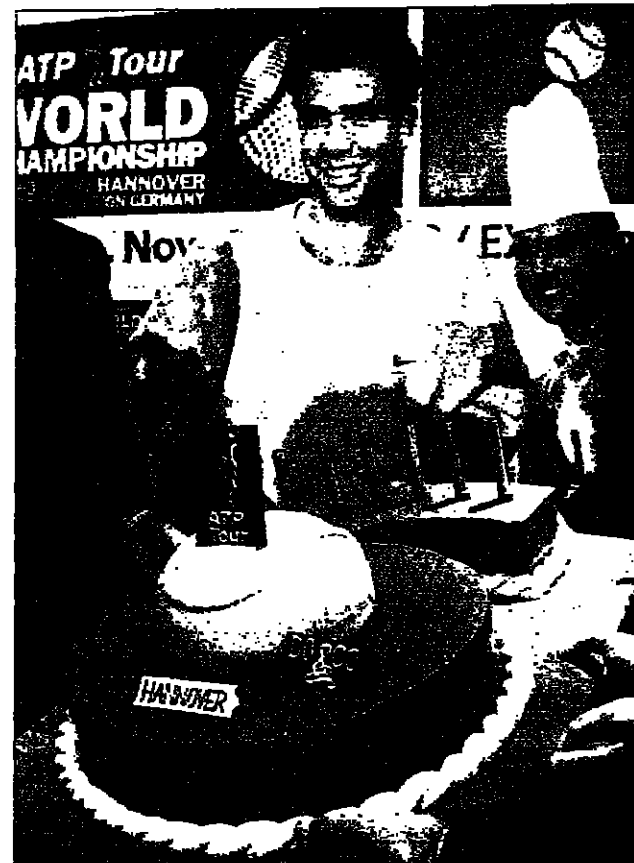
Staying No. 1 for six consecutive years, Sampras said, required a lot of hard work.

"It was well worth the sacrifice," he said, just before champagne was poured over his head at a little ceremony. He returned the favour, showering ATP Tour chief Mark Miles and promoter Ion Tiriac.

There was also a cake representing the figure six, with a chocolate tennis ball inside the circle.

"It's an ultimate achievement, it will probably never be broken," he said. "I'm trying to stay humble through all this, but the record speaks for itself. It's a little overwhelming."

Sampras was assured of the record when Marcelo Rios of Chile, the only player with a chance to overtake him,



U.S. tennis player Pete Sampras receives a cake to celebrate his new record at the ATP tennis world championships in Hanover, northern Germany, late Thursday. For six consecutive years Sampras will finish the end of the year as World's No. 1 in tennis (AP photo)

pulled out of the ATP Tour World Championship, an elite \$3.5 million season-ending tournament, because of a back injury.

Rios trailed Sampras 33 points on the computer rank-

A relaxed Sampras then demonstrated why he is No. 1, crushing Kucera 6-2, 6-1 in 45 minutes. Kucera is No. 7 and beat Sampras once in their three previous matches this year.

If Sampras wins the tournament for the fifth time, he will pull even with Ivan Lendl on the career list. Sampras won the event in 1991, 1994 and the last two years.

After Andre Agassi, Rios was the second player to pull out of the tournament that nominally brings together the top eight players of the year. Greg Rusedski, replacing Agassi, played Albert Costa, who replaced Rios, and won 7-6 (7-5), 6-1.

Tim Henman became the second player to reach the semifinals when he beat Alex Corretja 7-6 (7-4), 6-7, (4-7), 6-2.

Corretja dropped to 1-1 but remains alive under the round-robin format. Henman is 2-0.

On Friday, Yevgeny Kafelnikov was to play Carlos Moya for a place in the semifinals.

Also, Rusedski faces Henman and Costa meets Corretja in matches determining the other two semifinalists. With Henman already through, Corretja and Rusedski are still in the running.

Corretja will advance if Rusedski loses to Henman.

Squash likely to crown a new champion

DOHA (AFP) — Results during the lead-up to the World Open Squash Championship, which starts on Saturday in this Gulf kingdom, point to a new champion being crowned.

The favourite to claim the title, currently held by Australia's Rodney Eyles, is Peter Nicol of Scotland.

For the first time since 1987, there is a field of 64 contesting the championship which, since its inception in 1976, has been won by only six men — three Australians, two Pakistanis and a New Zealander.

Pakistan's Jansher Khan, who won it a record eight times in 10 appearances, relinquished the title by default last year and is not in contention again this year, because of injury.

The Pakistani's withdrawal

is ironic, because it was to ensure his participation that the venue of the tournament was shifted from India to Doha. The ruling political party in Mumbai, Shiv Sena, had threatened to disrupt the event if Jansher played.

Form, as well as status, give Nicol, the 25-year-old who was the losing finalist last year, every encouragement. The top seed has headed the world rankings since February and holds the British Open Championship as well as having won the Commonwealth Games gold medal.

The Scot's closest rival is likely to be Jonathon Power of Canada, who is 18 months younger. There was a time when Nicol found Power, fast and creative, impossible to beat. But the Scot ended the Canadian's supremacy in

the Commonwealth Games final.

Since then, Nicol has been twice beaten Power — in the U.S. Open and the Heliopolis Open in Cairo — both times by a clear margin.

To reach the final next Saturday, Nicol will probably need to beat his conqueror in last year's final in Kuala Lumpur, Eyles, who is seeded three.

The other semi-finals pairing is expected to be Power versus Alex Gough, of Wales, a surprise semi-finalist last year. Gough's seeding of four rather flatters him, however.

Power's toughest opponent on his way to the final may well be the young Egyptian, Ahmed Barada, who will be

inspired by immense crowd support in an Arab country.

Power and Barada, the fifth seeded, are drawn to meet each other in the quarter-finals and their clash could be eventful and, probably, highly exciting.

Thanks to the draw being enlarged this year from the customary 32 to 64, there is a proliferation of Pakistani entries. But the anonymity of most of them is a commentary on the decline of squash in the country which has dominated the sport for most of the post-war era.

Pakistan's leading contender is Amjad Khan, a nephew of the great Jansher.

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Germany refuses to take Ocalan from Italy

BONN (R) — Fearing unrest in Germany, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder refused on Friday to extradite Abdullah Ocalan from Italy, saying the international community should set up a court to try the Kurdish guerrilla leader.

But Turkey forged ahead with its plans to demand Rome hand over the man it blames for a 14-year campaign in which 29,000 people have been killed.

Schröder asked Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema to appreciate German concerns about the possibility of conflict between Germany's 2.2 million Turks and half a million Kurds if Ocalan were put on trial here.

"This is one of the most difficult decisions that has had to be made in the recent past," Schröder told a joint news conference with

D'Alema in Bonn.

"I have asked the Italian prime minister for his understanding that we will not make a request for extradition."

"This is because we are the country in Europe with the most Kurds — often refugees — and Turkish citizens," Schröder said.

Italy had urged Germany to implement an eight-year-old arrest warrant for Ocalan, whose Kurdish Labour Party has been waging a bloody self-rule campaign in southeastern Turkey.

"It was simply the question whether we wanted... the feared conflict to be carried out in Germany or not," said Schröder, who has been in office for just one month. "We decided to protect the peace in Germany."

Turkey gave no immediate response to the German

decision. Ocalan was arrested when he arrived in Rome two weeks ago, sparking a row with Ankara which wants to try him on treason charges. Italy refuses to hand him over to a country where he would face the death penalty if convicted.

Schröder said he and D'Alema had agreed they would work immediately to have Ocalan appear before a European or an international court.

"I am convinced one must find a solution so that an international court can decide on Ocalan," D'Alema said.

He acknowledged that he had to come up with a suitable court by Dec. 22 when the warrant ordering Ocalan held in Italy expires.

"I hope that we will have found a way to deal with this problem before that date," D'Alema said.



A Kurdish protester sits on a handmade paper-tank with a Turkish banner during a demonstration in Bonn on Friday for a political solution for Kurds in Turkey. Today German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema will talk about Germany's decision on whether or not to ask Italy for Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan's extradition (AP photo)

Arab MKs, Shoman, Masri land at Gaza

RAFAH (AFP) — Four Arab members of the Israeli Knesset flew into Gaza's newly-opened international airport on Friday to congratulate Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on recent progress in the peace process.

The small private plane chartered from an Israeli company carried Abdul Wahab Darawsheh, Abdul Malek Dahamsheh, Talab Sanaa and Tawfiq Al Khateib, all members of the United Arab List in the Israeli parliament or Knesset.

The Arab deputies were met by Tayeb Abdul Rahim, the secretary to the Palestinian cabinet, and Mohammad Dablan, the head of internal security in the Gaza Strip, witnesses said.

There are 12 Arab deputies in the Knesset representing one million Arab descendants of those who stayed in their villages and towns after the creation of the Jewish state in 1948.

Five minutes after the arrival of the deputies, a second plane carrying two senior Palestinian expatriate businessmen landed en route from Jordan.

The Jordanian plane carried Abdul Majid Shoman, the chairman of Amman-based Arab Bank, and Munib Al Masri, the chairman of PADICO, the domi-

nant private sector company in the Palestinian territories.

The deputies and businessmen were then whisked away for a meeting with Arafat in his office 30 kilometres to the north in Gaza City, the witnesses said.

After some two years of delay, Gaza international airport finally opened on Tuesday amid scenes of great celebration among Palestinians with the arrival of nine planes from Arab and European countries.

The airport is due to start commercial operations next week.

Arafat landed at the airport for the first time Thursday on his return home from a two-day official visit to France.

Arafat said he was pleased with the outcome of the meetings he held and with France's support for the creation of a Palestinian state.

"The French position is one of a friend standing by the Palestinian people through all stages of the struggle to establish an independent Palestinian state," Arafat told journalists at his office here.

Arafat left from the newly inaugurated Gaza International Airport Wednesday. The airport is perceived as an important step towards Palestinian sovereignty.

Netanyahu cuts short European tour

(Continued from page 1)

Thursday's deaths brought to 23 the number of Israelis killed in south Lebanon this year, and came only some 24 hours after two soldiers died in a similar Hizbollah bombing.

The mounting casualties have revived demands from both within Netanyahu's right-wing coalition and in the opposition for a unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon, where Israel has maintained a presence since 1978.

An opinion poll published Friday showed that the number of Israelis in favour of a unilateral withdrawal had nearly doubled from 22 per cent in March to 40 per cent this week.

But Israeli chief of staff General Shaul Mofaz cautioned against an overhasty response.

"There is no need to lose our cool — the Israeli people and army have known difficult days in the past," Mofaz told Israel Radio.

"The army is going to try to limit our losses, but we can't guarantee that there will be no casualties on our side," he said. Mofaz said he still supported the idea of an Israeli "security zone" in south Lebanon. "We think that by staying in the security zone, we can defend our towns and villages on the northern border," he said. "There is no miracle solution."

Hizbollah warned on Friday that it would attack civilian tar-

gets in Israel if the Jewish state retaliated against Lebanese civilians for its killing of four Israeli soldiers.

"We are ready for anything, and there's no question that we would go back on our commitment to protect civilians," said Hizbollah official Sheikh Nabil Quak. He was responding to a warning from Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai Thursday that Lebanon would "not remain untouched" if Hizbollah attacks against Israeli troops continued.

Hizbollah has sharply escalated its attacks on Israeli forces in the buffer zone over the past two weeks in what many analysts see as a move aimed at pressuring Israel to resume peace negotiations with Syria, which is the principal political force in Lebanon.

The peace talks were suspended nearly three years ago under Israel's former Labour government and Netanyahu has refused Syria's demand they be resumed where they broke off — with a Labour agreement in principle to withdraw from the occupied Golan Heights in exchange for peace.

"No matter what its military plans are, Israel can never stop the operations of (Hizbollah)," Syrian state radio warned on Friday as President Hafez Al Assad discussed the latest developments by telephone with Lebanese President Emile Lahoud.

Dissidents urge U.S. to stop backing Iraqi opposition

Agencies

A GROUP of Iraqi dissidents urged the United States Thursday to let the Iraqi people choose their own opposition leader in their quest to topple Saddam Hussein.

Iraqi opposition groups said Wednesday that the United States had nominated Adnan Al Pachachi, a former foreign minister, to forge a united Iraqi opposition movement that would try to topple Saddam.

The Clinton administration has "to let the Iraqi people themselves choose their national opposition leader," said a group of 85 London-based independent dissidents in a statement faxed to the Associated Press office in Cairo.

The dissidents are mostly

professionals and academics who are not linked to any Iraqi opposition group.

They said the United States should help the Iraqi people in their efforts to overthrow Saddam but to let the Iraqis choose the way to go about it.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk proposed Al Pachachi's name during his meeting with 16 Iraqi opposition leaders in London on Tuesday, according to some of the participants who spoke on condition of anonymity.

U.S. officials, also requesting anonymity, would not confirm the report.

The U.S. Congress has allocated \$97 million aid for Iraqi dissidents.

The 85 Iraqi dissidents criticised the United States for letting down the Iraqi people

when it did not come to their help during the 1991 uprisings.

Saddam brutally crushed the uprisings by Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq and by Iraqi Kurds in the north in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war.

The United States, which led an international coalition to free Kuwait from invading Iraqi troops failed to come to their aid, hence enabling Saddam's forces to crush the uprisings.

"The United States denied the Iraqi people several opportunities to get rid of Saddam," the dissidents said.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani said that the opposition in exile is not capable of overthrowing the government of President Saddam Hussein.

"In spite of our respect for the Iraqi opposition in exile, we don't think that it is capable of doing something" to change the government, said Talabani, who heads the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of two main rival Kurdish factions which control northern Iraq in defiance of Baghdad.

"Because of its cooperation with foreign forces, this opposition cannot win the approval of the Iraqi people," the PUK leader told the Qatar-based satellite television station Al Jazeera in an interview from Tehran.

"We are persuaded that the Iraqi people's problems must be settled by the Iraqi people and its operative forces and not by foreign interference," said Talabani, who added that

"the operative forces are inside Iraq."

"There is wide-ranging opposition in Iraq, but it is not united. That's its weak point. This opposition is not in a position to address itself, with one and the same voice, to the Iraqi people in all their component communities," he said.

Talabani said Sunday in Damascus that he will not participate in plotting to overthrow the Iraqi president. The PUK and the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Massud Barzani have controlled mainly Kurdish districts of northern Iraq since Western governments intervened to stop Baghdad crushing a Kurdish uprising following the 1991 Gulf war.

Italian-Palestinian team find gates of Jericho

By Kelly Velasquez
AFP

ROME — An Italian-Palestinian archaeological team has uncovered what it says are the long-lost gates to ancient Jericho in Palestine, the city where the biblical Joshua fought his famous battle.

It was one of two major finds by the team at the West Bank site, along with earlier ruins that could yield clues about daily life in 3000 BC.

"At this site, which is surrounded by several walls, we couldn't manage to find the gateway," said Lorenzo Nigro, one of the Italian academics in charge of the dig which is financed by La Sapienza University in Rome.

"We finally found it eight metres underground and we

are convinced it is the only one," he told reporters. "It was built between 1900 and 1500 BC."

The site, near the modern-day oasis town of the same name, has been under excavation for nearly a century and has revealed what experts say is one of the oldest known settlements in the world, dating from 8000 BC.

Archaeologists from over the world have come in search of the gates of the ancient Jericho which Joshua, Moses' successor as leader of the Israelites, captured from the Canaanites. Erosion has destroyed the town of Joshua, but scholars generally believe the conquest of Palestine was somewhere around 1400 to 1250 BC.

Nigro's team is also the first one decided on by the

new Palestinian administration that has taken over the former Israeli-occupied West Bank areas that were turned over to the Palestinian National Authority.

Nigro said the "gateway is on the southeastern side of the site, in the direction of Jerusalem," and could take at least three years to expose completely.

"It was built in a zone with difficult access and was protected by two towers with walls seven metres thick, and a base three-and-a-half metres wide," he said.

The team's other discovery was a dozen dwellings estimated to date from 3000 BC.

"Jericho is not the oldest stronghold in the world, but it was the first with fortified features, including eight-metre high towers, at a time

when men were still hunters and ceramic did not yet exist."

"We are talking about 10,000 years ago," said Nigro.

Of the dozen or so dwellings, six have already been excavated to the point where they have revealed secrets about a community relatively unknown up to now.

Among the most surprising finds, which must still be examined thoroughly, are beef bones and the remains of dozens of instruments apparently used to cook meat.

"We might be able to demonstrate that cows were not only used for milk but also kept for their meat could be consumed. This would be the first time that such a thing has been observed" in archaeological digs in

Palestine, Nigro said.

The presence of cattle clearly played a part in the formation of the city and "we must determine if they killed their cattle to eat them or to use their skins," said Francesca Alhaque, a researcher at the dig.

Jericho, which lies 23 kilometres northwest of Jerusalem just north of the Dead Sea in the Jordan Valley, was destroyed several times — once burnt on the order of the Pharaoh — leaving large gaps in its known history.

The dig, a popular tourists site, has so far not turned up any evidence to substantiate the biblical account of Joshua's conquest of the town, when he was told to walk seven times around Jericho blowing the ram's horn and the walls would come tumbling down.

Palestinians, Israeli troops clash

(Continued from page 1)

Hebron is the site of frequent friction between settlers, Israeli soldiers and Palestinians. About 450 settlers live in the downtown area which remains under Israeli control. The remainder of the city of 130,000 Palestinians is run by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

In a demonstration in the Palestinian city of Ramallah on Thursday, Palestinian protesters called on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to attack Israel, witnesses said.

"O Saddam, O Saddam, Bomb, Bomb Tel Aviv," chanted a small number of youths while some burned U.S. and Israeli flags during a march through the city of Ramallah.

Organisers quickly stepped in and told the roughly 350 youths to halt the chants, which violated a decree issued last week by the PNA chief Yasser Arafat banning incitement to violence against Israel and other "neighbouring states."

A small number of Palestinian police were present during the march but did not intervene.

Publication of the anti-incitement decree was one of a series of conditions laid down in the recent Wye River land-for-security accord with Israel.

Under the deal, Israel carried out the first of three withdrawals from the West Bank last week. Two more pull-backs are scheduled over the next two months.

Thursday's rally was organised by the Popular Palestinian Committee for Aid to Iraq, an umbrella group made up largely of members of leftist movements which are opposed to peace accords with Israel.

For the most part the marchers shouted slogans calling for U.N. sanctions against Iraq to be lifted and denouncing the United States and Britain, who during recent crises with Baghdad have led threats to launch air raids against Iraq.

"The Security Council is an American council" and "Clinton, you miserable coward" were among the slogans shouted by marchers.

During the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles on Israel in retaliation for the U.S.-led offensive to oust

Iraqi occupation troops from Kuwait.

One person was killed and hundreds injured by the missiles, most of which hit the Tel Aviv area.

Thursday's march coincided with a renewed surge in tensions between the United Nations and Iraq over Baghdad's repeated attempts to hamper U.N. inspectors mandated to track down and destroy weapons of mass destruction banned under the Gulf war ceasefire accord.

Moves by Baghdad to curb the weapons inspections led to a showdown early this month between Iraq and a U.S.-led alliance which threatened air strikes against Iraq if it did not comply with U.N. disarmament resolutions.

After defusing the last crisis with a new promise to cooperate with U.N. inspectors, Baghdad last week prompted a fresh standoff by refusing to hand over documents relating to illegal weaponry.

Palestinians have historically been strong supporters of Saddam, and Arafat backed the Iraqi leader during the Gulf war.

Baghdad: U.S. seeking any excuse to strike

(Continued from page 1)

"The staff has now been reinforced. We have had new staff in, but are still below full strength," Caroline Cross, spokeswoman for the U.N. arms monitoring centre in Baghdad, told AFP.

She declined to give an exact figure, but said work was continuing. "Teams went out as usual this morning. We are carrying on with our normal activities," said Cross.

According to Iraqi officials, UNSCOM has stepped up the pace of daily site visits since resuming work on Nov.

18 and carried out dozens of "surprise" inspections, with Iraq's full cooperation.

But UNSCOM has shed doubts on reports the work has moved up a gear from routine monitoring of Iraqi sites, and its chief Richard Butler said last week that intrusive inspections were still "three or four weeks" away. Turning down the UNSCOM chairman's demands for more weapons documents, Iraq says it has already surrendered over two million such documents since the disarmament work started in 1991.

Turkish rivals signal alliance

(Continued from page 1)

A 1996 alliance broke up after only three months when Yilmaz party backed a corruption inquiry into Mrs. Ciller.

However, neither has enough votes to sustain a majority and would need

the backing of a third party. Bulent Ecevit, who is the deputy premier in the caretaker government, made it clear Thursday that the two parties could count on his support.

Yilmaz remains caretaker premier until a new government is formed.

Indian doctor weds Lord Krishna

LUCKNOW (AFP) — Wedding days are a nervous time for brides, but especially so when the bridegroom is a God. For Snehlata Rajput, a 40-year-old doctor from the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, her marriage Thursday night to the popular Hindu God Lord Krishna was the culmination of a 25-year "affair." The wedding ceremony included all the traditional rites and was exactly the same as for any other Hindu marriage, except that the bridegroom was a 60x60-centimetre portrait.

Archbishop urges tolerance toward homosexuality

LENNOXVILLE (AP) — Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, 67, says the world needs to show more tolerance to gay men and women. People who are gay haven't chosen their sexual orientation, said Tutu, who received an honorary doctorate Thursday from Bishop's University, a small university in an English-speaking enclave east of Montreal. In an interview, Tutu suggested there's something strange about the notion that people would make a deliberate decision whether to be gay or lesbian.

France to make world's biggest bell for U.S.

NANTES (AFP) — The world's biggest bell is to be made in a foundry here next month before being shipped to the U.S. for celebrations marking the year 2000, officials said on Thursday. Paul Patton, governor of the U.S. state of Kentucky, and Jean-Marc Ayrault, mayor of the western French town, said the bell, weighing around 30 tonnes with a diameter of four metres, will be cast on Dec. 11. The bell is to be installed in the Millennium Monument in Newport Kentucky, a complex featuring a 300-metre tower, a museum and shops to be constructed in the next few years.

Kidman admits using drugs

SYDNEY (AFP) — Actress Nicole Kidman has admitted using drugs, but told a magazine she was never addicted and now gets her kicks from sport. "I've done my share of drugs," the 31-year-old actress told the December Australian edition of fashion magazine Marie Claire. "I've been working in the film industry since I was 14, so I've been in contact with every drug imaginable. But I never was addicted to them — I was lucky. I got a huge depression after taking drugs." The Australian wife of American sex symbol Tom Cruise said she was now addicted to adrenaline and sought her thrills through sports such as skydiving.

Hogan aims for White House

BURBANK (AP) — No more body slams or pile drives for "Hollywood" Hulk Hogan, who has his eyes set on the White House. The buffed-out, moustachioed stalwart of professional wrestling announced his retirement Thursday so he can run for president in 2000. "I had a great career and the fans have been great," Hogan said on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno." "I thank them for sticking with me — and this helps me segue into being the next president of the United States." Hogan, 45, has said that former pro wrestler Jesse "The Body" Ventura's election as Minnesota governor inspired his presidential bid.